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General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Alberto Fujimori, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fujimori (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Peru is greatly pleased, Sir, at your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, especially since Peru was an active participant in Namibia's independence process, which was advanced by the United Nations. As the first speaker at this morning's meeting I am particularly pleased to congratulate you and the other officers of the General Assembly.

The arrival of the new millennium is a great historic opportunity to initiate an era of peace, progress and well-being, from which no people on Earth should be excluded. That requires a greater commitment on the part of the international community to create conditions that will enable developing nations properly to channel their own energy and potential with a view to achieving comprehensive national development.

At the height of the twentieth century, the majority of the world's peoples remain mired in the social, cultural and technological conditions of the nineteenth century — or even of earlier centuries. We shall be able truly to speak of a new era only if our aspirations for the twenty-first century and the third millennium become tangible reality for those peoples and if those peoples succeed in fulfilling their own legitimate aspirations: in other words, if a globalized world can globalize well-being and dignity.

The conversion of our economies to adapt them to globalization has social costs which we can bear provided that this process assures us a future of development and well-being, not one of additional frustrations. Such frustrations could arise if our national economies, rather than growing stronger, are weakened by economic opening based on unequal or unjust terms of trade. The reaction, which no one wishes to see, could be a return to defeated economic ideas.

In speaking of my own country, Peru, I can say that, like other peoples, it inherited a heavy burden of injustice and backwardness, but it also has an extraordinary future-looking calling that has made it possible over the past 10 years for our country to become an emerging economy.

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That future-looking calling has enabled us to defeat the totalitarian, terrorist designs of the Shining Path and of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. It was the latter group that seized the residence of the Japanese Ambassador in 1996.

The destructive capacity of such criminal activity is on the increase thanks to access to new technology, and today it threatens every region and every continent. If it is not duly stopped, it will undoubtedly become the nightmare of the twenty-first century. Both internal and external peace are essential for the coming of the new era that we are championing.

In 1998, Peru and Ecuador were at a crossroads: either to pursue the path of armed conflict, the situation typical of the entire century, which has led to the destruction of peoples; or to follow the path of peace, the only possibility for development. Peru and Ecuador chose peace. The 1998 peace agreement between Peru and Ecuador was the product of two equally important factors: the political will of two Governments taken to its ultimate conclusion; and the capacities, energy and awareness of two peoples determined to overcome old prejudices and work towards a future of development. Ecuador and Peru intend to reach the twenty-first century without the baggage of the nineteenth. Peace has opened up possibilities for the development of Peru and of Ecuador thanks to savings in resources once earmarked for defence, and it has shown again that Latin America is a mature region that rejects warlike tension.

But tranquility in our region has been disturbed by the alliance of drug trafficking and terrorism. In some cases, these criminal activities have created power sufficient to challenge States as well as to upset the world economy: illicit drug money may have infiltrated productive, commercial and even political activities. Terrorism and drug trafficking therefore represent a threat to modern society and to good governance.

In general terms, poverty, terrorism, drug trafficking and racial discrimination are the main barriers to our glimpsing the new era that as civilized peoples we propose to reach. Our task and our commitment is to overcome these obstacles with firm political will if we want this transitional period in which we live to mark the threshold of a new era for mankind.

The concepts of democracy and fairness must prevail. It is important to promote democracy within countries, but also to promote it between countries and between peoples. Democracy applies not only to the internal structure of States, but also to the international relations that will determine the fate of the world.

Human rights raised to their maximal power and highest expression are the rights of peoples, and all peoples have a right to the future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alberto Fujimori, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Today, we look ahead to the new millennium. And at this last General Assembly of the twentieth century, we look back on a century that taught us much of what we need to know about the promise of tomorrow. We have learned a great deal over the last one hundred years: how to produce enough food for a growing world population; how human activity affects the environment; the mysteries of the human gene. An information revolution now holds the promise of universal access to knowledge. We have learned that open markets create more wealth, that open societies are more just. We have learned how to come together, through the United Nations and other institutions, to advance common interests and values.

Yet for all our intellectual and material advances, the twentieth century has been deeply scarred by enduring human failures: by greed and lust for power, by hot-blooded hatreds and stone-cold hearts. At century's end, modern developments magnify greatly the dangers of these timeless flaws. Powerful forces still resist

reasonable efforts to put a human face on the global economy, to lift the poor, or to heal the earth's environment. Primitive claims of racial, ethnic or religious superiority, when married to advanced weaponry and terrorism, threaten to destroy the greatest potential for human development in history, even as they make a wasteland of the soul.

Therefore, we look to the future with hope, but with unanswered questions. In the new millennium, will nations be divided by ethnic and religious conflicts? Will the nation-state itself be imperiled by them, or by terrorism? Or will we keep coming closer together instead, while enjoying the normal differences that make life more interesting? In the new century, how will patriotism be defined — as faith in a dream worth living, or as fear and loathing of other people's dreams? Will we be free of the fear of weapons of mass destruction, or forced to teach our grandchildren how to survive a nuclear, chemical or biological attack? Will globalism bring shared prosperity, or will it make the desperate of the world even more desperate? Will we use science and technology to grow the economy and protect the environment, or put it all at risk in a world dominated by a struggle over natural resources?

The truth is that the twentieth century's amazing progress has not resolved these questions. But it has given us the tools to make the answers come out right — the knowledge, the resources, the institutions. Now, we must use them. If we do, we can make the millennium not just a changing of the digits, but a true changing of the times — a gateway to greater peace, prosperity and freedom. With that in mind, I offer three resolutions for the new millennium.

First, let us resolve to wage an unrelenting battle against poverty and for shared prosperity so that no part of humanity is left behind in the global economy. Globalization is not inherently divisive. While infant mortality in developing countries has been cut nearly in half since 1970, life expectancy has increased by 10 years. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, which measures a decent standard of living, a good education, a long and healthy life, the gap between rich and poor countries on this measure has actually declined.

Open trade and new technologies have been engines of this progress; they have helped hundreds of millions to see their prospects rise by marketing the fruits of their labor and creativity abroad. With proper investments in education, developing countries should be able to keep their best and brightest talent at home and to gain access to global markets for goods and services and capital.

But this promising future is far from inevitable. We are still squandering the potential of far too many. As many as 1.3 billion people still live on less than a dollar a day. More than half the population of many countries has no access to safe water. A person in South Asia is 700 times less likely to use the Internet than someone in the United States. Forty million people a year still die of hunger, almost as many as the total number killed in World War II. We must refuse to accept a future in which one part of humanity lives on the cutting edge of a new economy, while the other lives at the knife edge of survival.

What must we do? We can start by remembering that open markets advance the blessings and breakthroughs we want to spread. That is why we in the United States have worked to keep our markets open during the recent global financial crisis, though it has brought us record trade deficits. It is why we want to launch a new global trade round when the World Trade Organization meets in Seattle this fall. It is why we are working to build a trading system that strengthens the well-being of workers and consumers, protects the environment and makes competition a race to the top, not the bottom. It is why I am proud we have come together at the International Labour Organization to ban abusive child labour everywhere in the world.

We do not face a choice between trade and aid, but instead the challenge to make both work for people who need them. Aid should focus on what is known to work: credit for poor people starting businesses, keeping girls in school, meeting the needs of mothers and children. Development aid should be used for development, not to buy influence or finance donors' exports. It should go where Governments invest in their people and answer to their concerns.

We should also come to the aid of countries struggling to rise but held down by the burden of debt. The G-7 nations have adopted a plan to reduce by up to 70 per cent the outstanding debt of the world's poorest countries, freeing resources for education, health and growth.

All of us, developed and developing countries alike, should take action now to halt global climate change. What has that to do with fighting poverty? A great deal. The most vulnerable members of the human family will

be hurt first and hurt most if rising temperatures devastate agriculture, accelerate the spread of disease in tropical countries and flood island nations.

Does this mean developing countries must sacrifice growth to protect the environment? Absolutely not. Throughout history, a key to human progress has been willingness to abandon big ideas that are no longer true. One big idea that is no longer true is that the only way to build a modern economy is to use energy as we did in the industrial age. The challenge and opportunity for developing countries today is to skip the costs of the industrial age by using technologies that improve the economy and the environment at the same time.

Finally, to win the fight against poverty, we must improve health care for all people. Over the next 10 years in Africa, AIDS is expected to kill more people and orphan more children than all the wars of the twentieth century combined. Each year diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and pneumonia leave millions of children without parents and millions of parents without children. Yet for all these diseases, vaccine research is advancing too slowly, in part because the potential customers are too poor. Only 2 per cent of all global biomedical research is devoted to the major killers in the developing world.

No country can break poverty's bonds if its people are disabled by disease and its Government overwhelmed by the needs of the ill. With United Nations leadership, we have come close to eradicating polio, once the scourge of children everywhere. We are down to 5,000 reported cases worldwide. I have asked our Congress to fund a major increase to finish the job, and I ask other nations to follow suit. We have begun a comprehensive battle against the global AIDS epidemic. This year I am seeking another $100 million for prevention, counselling and care in Africa. I want to do more to get to those who need them most new drugs that prevent transmission from mothers to newborns. And today I commit the United States to a concerted effort to accelerate the development and delivery of vaccines for malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS and other diseases that disproportionately affect the developing world. Many approaches have been proposed, from tax credits to special funds for the purchase of these vaccines.

To tackle these issues, I will ask public-health experts, the chief executive officers of our pharmaceutical companies, foundation representatives and members of Congress to join me at a special White House meeting and to strengthen incentives for research and development, working with, not against, the private sector to meet our common goal.

The second resolution I hope we will make today is to strengthen the capacity of the international community to prevent and whenever possible to stop outbreaks of mass killing and displacement. This requires, as we all know, shared responsibility, like the one West African nations accepted when they acted to restore peace in Sierra Leone; the one 19 democracies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) embraced to stop ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and in Kosovo; the one that Asian and Pacific nations have now assumed in East Timor, with the strong support of the entire United Nations, including the United States.

Secretary-General Annan spoke for all of us during the Kosovo conflict, and more recently in regard to East Timor, when he said that ethnic cleansers and mass murderers can find no refuge in the United Nations, no source of comfort or justification in its Charter. We must do more to make these words real. Of course, we must approach this challenge with some considerable degree of humility. It is easy to say "never again", but much harder to make it so. Promising too much can be as cruel as caring too little.

But difficulties, dangers and costs are not an argument for doing nothing. When we are faced with deliberate, organized campaigns to murder whole peoples or expel them from their land, the care of victims is important but not enough. We should work to end the violence. Our response in every case cannot and should not be the same. Sometimes collective military force is both appropriate and feasible. Sometimes concerted economic and political pressure combined with diplomacy is a better answer, as it was in making possible the introduction of forces to East Timor. Of course, the way the international community responds will depend on the capacity of countries to act and on their perception of their national interests. NATO acted in Kosovo, for example, to stop a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing in a place where we had important interests at stake and the ability to act collectively.

The same considerations brought Nigerian troops and their partners to Sierra Leone and Australians and others to East Timor. That is proper — so long as we work together, support each other and do not abdicate our collective responsibility. I know that some are troubled that the United States and others cannot respond to every humanitarian catastrophe in the world. We

cannot do everything, everywhere. But simply because we have different interests in different parts of the world does not mean we can be indifferent to the destruction of innocents in any part of the world. That is why we have supported the efforts of Africans to resolve the deadly conflicts that have raged through parts of their continent. It is why we are working with friends in Africa to build the African Crisis Response Initiative, which has trained more than 4,000 peacekeepers from six countries. It is why we are helping establish an international coalition against genocide to bring nations together to stop the flow of money and arms to those who commit crimes against humanity.

There is also a critical need for countries emerging from conflict to build police institutions accountable to people and the law, often with the help of civilian police from other nations. We need international forces with the training to fill the gap between local police and military peacekeepers, as French, Argentine, Italian and other military police have done in Haiti and Bosnia. We will work with our partners and the United Nations to continue to ensure that such forces can deploy when they are needed.

What is the role of the United Nations of in preventing mass slaughter and dislocation? Very large. Even in Kosovo, NATO's actions followed a clear consensus, expressed in several Security Council resolutions, that the atrocities committed by Serb forces were unacceptable and that the international community had a compelling interest in seeing them end. Had we chosen to do nothing in the face of this brutality, I do not believe we would have strengthened the United Nations. Instead we would have risked discrediting everything it stands for.

By acting as we did, we helped to vindicate the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter to give the United Nations the opportunity it now has to play the central role in shaping Kosovo's future. In the real world, principles often collide and tough choices must be made. The outcome in Kosovo is hopeful.

Finally, as we enter this new era, let our third resolution be to protect our children against the possibility that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will ever be used again. The last millennium has seen constant advances in the destructive power of weaponry. In the coming millennium, this trend can continue or, if we choose, we can reverse it with global standards universally respected.

We have made more progress than many realize. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine courageously chose to give up their nuclear weapons. America and Russia have moved forward with substantial arms reductions. President Yeltsin and I agreed in June, even as we await Russian ratification of START II, to begin talks on a START III treaty that will cut our cold-war arsenals by 80 per cent from their height. Brazil has joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), capping a process that has almost totally eliminated the threat of nuclear proliferation in Latin America. We have banned chemical weapons from the Earth, though we must implement that commitment fully and gain universal coverage. One hundred and fifty-two nations have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and, while India and Pakistan did test nuclear weapons last year, the international reaction proved that the global consensus against proliferation is very strong.

We need to bolster the standards to reinforce that consensus. We must reaffirm our commitment to the NPT, strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and make fast progress on a treaty to ban production of fissile materials. To keep existing stocks from the wrong hands, we should strengthen the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials. And today, again I ask our Congress to approve the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We must stop the spread of nuclear weapons, materials and expertise at the source. Since 1992, we have worked with Russia and the other nations of the former Soviet Union to do that. We are expanding that effort because challenges remain, but thus far we can say that the nightmare scenario of deadly weapons flowing unchecked across borders and of scientists selling their services en masse to the highest bidder has been avoided.

Now, we must work to deny weapons of mass destruction to those who would use them. For almost a decade, nations have stood together to keep the Iraqi regime from threatening its people and the world with such weapons. Despite all the obstacles Saddam Hussein has placed in our path, we must continue to ease the suffering of the people of Iraq. At the same time, we cannot allow the Government of Iraq to flout 40 — and I say 40 — successive United Nations Security Council resolutions and to rebuild his arsenal.

Just as important is the challenge of keeping deadly weapons away from terrorist groups. They may have

weaker capabilities than States, but they have fewer compunctions about using such weapons. The possibility that terrorists will threaten us with weapons of mass destruction can be met with neither panic nor complacency. It requires serious, deliberate, disciplined concern and effective cooperation from all of us.

There are many other challenges. Today I have spoken about just three: the need to do something about the world's poor and to put a human face on the global economy; the need to do more to prevent killing and dislocation of innocents; the need to do more to ensure that weapons of mass destruction will never be used on our children. I believe they are the most important. In meeting them, the United Nations is indispensable.

It is precisely because we are committed to the United Nations that we have worked hard to support the effective management of this body. But the United States also has a responsibility to equip the United Nations with the resources it needs to be effective. As I think most Members know, I have strongly supported the United States meeting all its financial obligations to the United Nations and I will continue to do so. We will do our very best to succeed this year.

When the cold war ended, the United States could have chosen to turn away from the opportunities and dangers of the world. Instead, we have tried to be engaged, involved and active. We know this moment of unique prosperity and power for the United States is a source of concern to many. I can only answer by saying this: In the seven years that I have been privileged to come here to speak to this body, America has tried to be a force for peace. We believe we are better off when nations resolve their differences by force of argument rather than force of arms. We have sought to help former adversaries like Russia and China become prosperous, stable members of the world community because we feel far more threatened by the potential weakness of the world's leading nations than by their strength. Instead of imposing our values on others, we have sought to promote a system of government — democracy — that empowers people to choose their own destinies according to their own values and aspirations. We have sought to keep our markets open because we believe a strong world economy benefits our own workers and businesses, as well as the people of the world who are selling to us. I hope that we have been and will continue to be good partners with the rest in the new millennium.

Not long ago, I went to a refugee camp in Macedonia. The people I met there, children and adults alike, had suffered horrible, horrible abuses, but they had never given up hope because they believed that there is an international community that stands for their dignity and their freedom. I want to make sure that, 20 or 50 or 100 years from now, people everywhere will still believe that about our United Nations. So let us resolve, in the bright dawn of the new millennium, to bring in an era in which our desire to create will overwhelm our capacity to destroy. If we do that, then, through the United Nations and far-sighted leaders, humanity finally can live up to its name.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Mr. President, I wish to express my warm congratulations to you upon your election to the presidency of this fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your unanimous election to the presidency is not only an attestation to the confidence we in Africa have in your leadership ability, but is also an affirmation of the faith the international community has in you to steer this organ successfully into the twenty-first century. You take up the helm of this body at a critical juncture, when we are here taking stock of where we stand on the eve of the new millennium.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency

Minister Didier Opertti of Uruguay, who presided over the affairs of this Assembly in a diligent and exemplary manner. We thank him for his conscientious efforts and sterling contribution.

May I also express our great appreciation of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, having recognized the great opportunities and challenges ahead of us, has worked tirelessly to help us map a noble vision for the future of our Organization.

We are also witnessing another historic moment for our Organization, as we admit into our midst three new members: Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga. We welcome them to our brotherhood of nations and wish them all the best as they chart their own destinies and make their contribution within our community of nations.

On our African continent, the holding of free and fair elections in Nigeria has ushered in a democratic dispensation worthy of our attention. This transformation serves as a monument erected to inform the international community that Africa has said "No" to the institutionalization of the route map from barracks to the State House, which hitherto the military has traversed with impunity. Further, the return to peace and democracy in Liberia and Sierra Leone bears ample testimony to Africa's renewed quest for democracy, peace and stability. It is, therefore, our fervent hope that the implementation of these peace agreements will lead to the restoration of normality in the region.

In the same spirit, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) alliance intervened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to uphold one of the most fundamental tenets of the United Nations Charter: respect for the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Aggression, under whatever pretext, should be condemned and opposed by the United Nations. We are, therefore, encouraged by the eventual participation of the rebels in the peace process.

We wish to register our most sincere gratitude to His Excellency President Chiluba of Zambia for his untiring efforts that succeeded in bringing the rebels on board this peace process. It must be emphasized, though, that the success or failure of a peacekeeping mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be determined by the availability of both human and material resources. We are, however, worried that an inadequately funded Democratic Republic of the Congo peacekeeping operation would be a clear manifestation of Africa's increasing marginalization in the new world order. We trust, therefore, that the United Nations will now render the requisite support to sustain this achievement.

We find this an opportune moment to call upon the international community not only to put its full weight behind African peace initiatives, but also to assess and buttress the institutional and operational capacity of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. In this vein, we hail the European Union's declaration that its future engagement with the belligerents involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conflict would depend on the latter's fulfilment of their obligations as spelt out in the Lusaka ceasefire agreement.

Sadly, the gains that we registered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace process are being negated by the renewed bloodbath in Angola, where, for the second time this decade, UNITA has resumed war, disregarding the 1994 Lusaka Peace Agreement. We therefore call upon the international community to put in place effective mechanisms that tighten the embargo against UNITA, particularly in the light of the recently concluded mission of Ambassador Robert Fowler, Chairman of the Security Council sanctions committee on UNITA.

Zimbabwe hails the acceptance by Eritrea and Ethiopia of the OAU Framework Agreement to end the war in the Horn of Africa. Zimbabwe, as a member of the high-level committee that coordinated the effort to end the war between the two African States, calls upon the United Nations to undergird this successful regional peace initiative with the necessary technical and other resources to make the process irreversible and permanent.

Since its inception the United Nations has had on its agenda a concern for economic and social development. The follow-up to the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development is currently being assessed, and it has become evident that a potentially explosive social situation confronts the world today. The soaring levels of unemployment, the deteriorating standards of living, the abject poverty in most developing countries, especially on our continent, Africa, are cause for serious concern.

We note that Africa's fortunes have continued to worsen despite the continent's best efforts. Growth slowed in the majority of African countries and, at 2.6

per cent in 1998, average gross domestic product for all of Africa fell far short of the eight per cent annual growth rate envisioned by the World Bank as the level capable of significantly reducing poverty levels on the continent. Adverse factors that contribute to this decline include slower growth of the world economy, declining commodity prices, the contagious effects of the Asian financial crisis, the El Niño weather pattern, civil strife and political turmoil in several spots.

At a time when greater challenges and opportunities are emerging within the context of globalization, it is crucial that Africa's nagging vulnerabilities are highlighted and addressed. Total African export revenues fell by nearly $14 billion in 1998, to just $112 billion, an 11 per cent drop from the 1997 level, mainly due to price declines. That negative trend has continued in 1999.

We are concerned that at a time when prospects for aid effectiveness in Africa are improving significantly, official development assistance to Africa has fallen to its lowest level. Between 1993 and 1997, total aid receipts in Africa fell by nearly 13 per cent, from $21 billion to $18.7 billion. At this rate, official development assistance flows have fallen far short of the $30 billion a year that economists estimate is needed to reduce poverty in Africa.

The net rate of return on investment in African countries remains higher than in other developing countries. It was estimated at 20 to 30 per cent during 1990 to 1994, on average, as opposed to 16 to 18 per cent for all developing countries. Yet in contrast to this great potential, Africa has not been a significant beneficiary of the dramatic increase in global foreign direct investment flows.

Africa's debt is essentially non-payable and certainly unsustainable under any sensible growth-oriented macroeconomic scenario. There is an urgent need to release more resources from debt servicing to financing development and creating conditions that encourage inflows of private foreign investment. Although the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative constitutes an important mechanism for debt relief, its eligibility criteria are rather restrictive. While the need for better debt management by Africa in the future is acknowledged, any credible solution to Africa's debt problem must indeed entail substantial debt cancellation.

We in Africa are therefore fully persuaded that it is time the international community deliberates on the substance and prospects for new aid modalities which emphasize a holistic and comprehensive approach. There is need for us to share views on how best to foster a new donor-beneficiary relationship in which multi-donor programmes focus on supporting an African-driven agenda.

In our own region of southern Africa, we are at an advanced stage of setting up a trade protocol meant to maximize our earnings from trade. With a majority of our members having ratified this protocol, only a couple more remain before it is operational.

We are also keenly aware of the critical role of telecommunications as an effective vehicle for successful international trade. Accordingly, my country only recently agreed to be a subregional host for the AFRITEL, an African regional telecommunications centre. We trust that international investors will see this as positive preparedness on the part of our continent not only to attract them and their investments, but indeed to concretely ensure that they also prosper in their endeavours on our continent.

The United Nations decade for the progressive development and codification of international law is coming to a close on an important note, with the establishment of the International Criminal Court. However, the Court can be successful only if it is universally accepted. We must, therefore, lend our unwavering support to this process so that we can complete this important milestone in the history of our Organization.

As we look into the new millennium, let us aspire to have an international order that espouses the twin objectives of universal peace and security on the one hand, and an improved quality of life for all the earth's inhabitants on the other. It must be an order characterized by justice and respect for international law. Such international law must surely have the effect of restraining both regional and international belligerent countries. We should join enthusiastically in the promotion of the achievements of the decade for the development of international law.

Zimbabwe is greatly disturbed at the cataclysmic turn of events in East Timor following the self-determination referendum there. The crisis chronicled in the report of the Security Council Mission to Jakarta and Dili was most disquieting. Zimbabwe therefore welcomes the deployment of the multinational force to restore peace and security in East Timor and to facilitate the delivery

of humanitarian assistance. We sincerely hope that the Security Council will soon authorize the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force whose financial and other resource requirements are vouched for by the entire membership of this Organization.

It would be remiss of me not to mention how inequitable it is that the membership of the Security Council should remain unreflective of the vastly altered international circumstances. The need for the reform of the Security Council is no longer just a lofty ideal we strive to achieve, but a prerequisite for the very existence of this Organization. The Security Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations, is entrusted to act on behalf of the entire membership, which to date has risen to 188 countries. The stark realities of the situation in the world must be reflected not only in the sheer increase in numbers, but also in consideration of the democratic principle of equitable geographical representation and participation.

It is grossly unjust that we, the developing countries, should remain totally unrepresented in the permanent membership of a body entrusted with such power and authority. The powers and privileges that the current members of the Security Council enjoy should be extended to all new members if the Council is to be effective.

And so, as we hold the last session of the General Assembly in the current millennium, it behooves us to make one giant leap into the future, not only in terms of wise and bold decisions, but also in terms of the commitment to implement them and see them bear fruit for us and for posterity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Irigoyen *(interpretation from Spanish):* I wish first of all to express our satisfaction at your election, which has accorded you the privilege of conducting the debate at this fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express our conviction that your recognized diplomatic and political experience will lead to creative results.

I should also like to pay a tribute to the Foreign Minister of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, whose diligence at the helm of the Assembly last session not only bore witness to his professional abilities, but also confirmed the commitment of that American nation to the principles on which the United Nations is based.

Exactly three years ago, on first taking the floor here, I began by announcing that we were very close to achieving peace in my country. Today I return to this Assembly four months before my term of office expires to summarize all that has transpired during the past three years of changes, many of which Guatemalans could not imagine when we signed the peace accords on 29 December 1996.

The first and most fundamental change that has taken place has been in the hearts and minds of Guatemalans, as can be seen in the way that the former guerrillas have been brought back in from the cold and are no longer outlaws, and in the return of the refugees.

After over three decades of an internal armed conflict marked by extreme cruelty, a conflict which was, among other things, an expression of profound and deep-rooted political and ideological intolerance, all the indications were that reintegrating the former guerrillas was going to be a complicated and dangerous process. Nevertheless, against all expectations, from the moment the ceasefire took hold until the former guerrillas took part in the electoral process, reintegration has taken place in an atmosphere not only of security but also of openness and tolerance on the part of all sectors of society. I should also like to highlight here the attitude of the Guatemalan army, which involved itself fully in the negotiating process and made fundamental contributions to it and then, once the peace accords had been signed,

not only complied fully with their provisions but was also positive in its attitude towards them. By acting in accordance with the spirit of the accords and not just the letter, it encouraged reconciliation and peaceful coexistence with its former adversaries.

At the local level, both the refugees and the former guerrillas have returned to their towns and villages and today, in many of those places, development committees have been set up composed of returnees, former guerrillas, former members of the civil patrols and former members of the armed forces, all of them working together to improve the lot of their communities by striking at the roots of their problems.

Also, at the public policy level, peace has meant social investment on a scale and of a quality unprecedented in our country's history. That investment has been effected in accordance with the social ethic and the development logic of the peace accords, and have also met the specific targets set in those accords.

Thus we have gone farther than anyone has before. We have gone as far as the most remote villages and hamlets and brought them education, health services, roads, electricity and water, though we know that much remains to be done. What we have achieved so far has already shown that if we can consolidate the opening to progress which our country has made, we can quickly remedy the effects of so very many years of backwardness.

We are also investing in the infrastructure and facilities needed for production in order to improve the country's competitive position in the globalized world of today. I would say that these two fundamental aspects I have mentioned, the reintegration of the former guerrilla forces into society and social investment, contain the fundamental elements on which a new Guatemala will be based.

Inherent to the processes through which the former guerrillas have been reintegrated and the refugees have been repatriated are reconciliation, tolerance, respect for diversity and legal or otherwise agreed solutions to conflicts.

The main thrust of public investment embodies a social ethic based on the common good and a tangible effort to improve access to opportunities for the least regarded sectors. Thus both processes form the foundations for maintaining and strengthening peaceful coexistence between Guatemalans, which has been the most significant qualitative result of the peace accords of December 1996: on the one hand, a peaceful settlement to the conflicts and, on the other, increasing efforts to redress the most serious injustices and opportunities for development for all.

Nevertheless, our internal endeavours have taken place in an adverse world economic context. As in almost every other Latin American country, the economy in Guatemala is experiencing a slowdown and a financial squeeze. Together with the effects of the crises in various regions and the persistent financial speculation that is constantly chipping away at productive, job-creating investment, the prices of our main export products have plummeted while the cost of our imports, particularly oil, have gone up substantially.

The negative impact of this situation particularly affected the strata of our society who are least capable of fending for themselves. This trend which is mainly caused by external factors, has been compounded by the direct and indirect effects of hurricane Mitch, which struck our sister countries of Honduras and Nicaragua particularly hard but also brought serious destruction to our own country and seriously affected trade within the Central American region, on which we are highly dependent.

As a result, the State's efforts to boost development cannot be as successful as they might otherwise be, particularly when compared with our people's expectations. We have created investment incentives, beginning with political stability, and going on to education and training, creation of infrastructure and provision of basic services. What has been accomplished in the way of public works and public services has generated tens of thousands of jobs. The work done on the roads and highways and on the electrical grid and telecommunications has significantly expanded the main bases of our economy. As a result of all these and other endeavours, the effects in our country of the negative economic developments taking place abroad have been less severe than in our sister countries that have stopped growing or have experienced negative economic growth.

We have created a foundation that will have a positive impact on the standard of living of the people, and especially of the neediest. These beneficial results will continue if we stay the course.

For even if we must continue to swim against the current of the world economy, which is temporarily

impoverishing us, we have available internal resources and can count on ongoing processes that are likely to produce structural change, provided that the efforts made over the past four years are consolidated, sustained and continued.

The Peace Agreements are, for Guatemala, the strategic elements of a profound, comprehensive and all-embracing effort to change our country. They represent the basic guidelines for the fundamental transformations necessary to build a different Guatemala, one that is profoundly democratic and committed to the integral and sustainable development of its people.

The peace agenda is equivalent to the democratization of the country, which is conceived as a functional and participatory democracy encompassing the political and cultural domains. A functioning democracy involves reform of the State, and its participatory character is what enables it to become a social democracy, which in turn strengthens its functionality.

In this respect, I cannot fail to mention the substantial increase in opportunities for popular participation that has resulted from the establishment, as mandated in the peace agreements, of over 15 multi-sectoral commissions, as well as the measures taken to extend and complement structures for the elaboration and adoption of public policy.

Also noteworthy are the efforts that have been made to decentralize the State and strengthen local institutions with a view to a rapprochement between the Government and the people and to giving them a greater say in public affairs.

Another fundamental process consists in the efforts being made to build a multicultural, plurilingual and multi-ethnic nation. This involves extremely complex work to roll back centuries of exclusion, discrimination and racism, and it presupposes profound cultural changes towards the tolerance and respect necessary for our cultural diversity to blossom and make the many contributions it can to our national development without putting the unity of the country at risk.

It has also been essential to redefine national security and defence. This has involved re-examining principles and rethinking the public security, national defence and intelligence apparatuses. We have made progress in the establishment of a new national civil police. This is a professional body that is trained to focus on the protection and defence of the individual and collective rights of citizens and is sensitive to, and respectful of, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities.

We have also further reduced our military forces, cutting back the budget and dismantling bases and other important elements of the military infrastructure, as provided for in the Peace Agreements, with the full concurrence and participation of the army.

The progress made in various areas is a source of legitimate pride for all Guatemalans as well as for the States that, as the Group of Friends, have supported us, and in particular for the Organization, whose role as our partner has enabled us to maintain optimism and hope in the difficult task of building peace and development.

Guatemala has been able to benefit from the essence of what the Organization does best: make available its good offices and serve as a facilitator in the various phases of the management of a conflict, act as an impartial verifying agency, provide unconditional cooperation and act as a trusted partner in assisting Member States to resolve problems.

I wish to stress the paramount importance of the role that has been played in Guatemala by the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, with a view to ensuring progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreements. The United Nations presence in our country and the exercise of its advisory and verification functions with impartiality and wisdom have contributed significantly to the implementation of the various phases of the commitments in the Peace Agreements.

Our Government attaches similar importance to other initiatives that the United Nations has undertaken in support of Guatemala's society. Our country is a testing ground for a new assistance framework that aims, among other things, to impart greater consistency to the work of the various agencies of the Organization. Our own evaluation of the assistance we have received is highly positive.

The number of activities the Organization is carrying out in Guatemala is quite high and increasing. It is therefore only fair to emphasize that the various agencies have been able to mobilize a considerable amount of additional resources from external sources.

Another positive contribution of the cooperation in question is the tangible impact it has had, through both its direct effects and its catalytic function in respect of public

expenditure and the policies carried out by the Government.

I therefore wish to convey our deep appreciation to the States Members of the United Nations, which have at all times supported the efforts of the various sectors of Guatemalan society to restore peace. Their political backing has been fundamental to the success of those efforts. I also extend my gratitude to the Secretariat, and in particular to Mr. Kofi Annan, as well as to the executive organs of the various agencies of the United Nations system, which have interpreted the mandates of the Organization and have demonstrated efficiency in their execution.

Finally, we fully appreciate the value of the work of other multilateral bodies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, and in particular the Inter-American Development Bank, which has played a dual role as direct source of financial assistance and organizer of the Consultative Group for Guatemala.

The success achieved by intergovernmental bodies in connection with the Guatemalan peace process is our basic reason for reiterating our conviction that cooperation between nations is indispensable in order to achieve peace and development for our peoples. That is why Guatemala remains firmly committed to the promotion of various kinds of multicultural and multi-ethnic undertakings, not only in the framework of the United Nations but also with respect to various endeavours at the regional and hemispheric levels.

One of the boldest and most challenging initiatives is the one being undertaken by Central America to achieve the economic and political integration of the region. Like the other States that compose the Central American Integration System, Guatemala is convinced that this strategic association strengthens the region in its relations with an increasingly competitive world, and it reiterates its commitment to continue promoting actions to enhance the effectiveness of Central American integration.

For those same reasons, Guatemala wishes to express its unreserved support for the strengthening of our Organization. We are firmly convinced that the United Nations must be the principal forum responsible for maintaining world peace. That is why we welcome the Security Council's prompt response to the crisis in East Timor. We believe that United Nations involvement in such situations confirms its functions as the sole organ competent to decide on the action to be taken in cases where the principle of non-intervention needs to be interpreted with due regard to the existence of violations of international humanitarian law.

In order that such functions be performed adequately, we need an Organization that is strong and flexible, with mechanisms and procedures that are capable of responding to the challenges of new world realities. We must accordingly reflect more deeply on the ideal design structure of an Organization that must compensate for the regional imbalances of power that have arisen in the post-cold-war world. This also means that we should pursue the reform of the Secretariat and of the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, including the Security Council.

We believe also that the United Nations should continue to deal with the greatest unfinished task of the twentieth century: wiping out world poverty. Together with the multilateral financial agencies, our Organization should play an indispensable role in ensuring that the benefits of globalization are distributed on a democratic basis, and that if we must all be exposed to the risks, we should all be entitled to enjoy the benefits.

Guatemala appreciates the Organization's contributions to promoting an international climate enabling disputes between and within States to be settled peacefully. As a State Member of the United Nations, Guatemala has always resolved all its international disputes in a peaceful manner and in accordance with international law.

We wish to reiterate to the Assembly our concern about the situation of the 22 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan whose aspirations for representation in international organizations have not been satisfied.

We welcome the new impetus that has been seen in the Middle East peace negotiations and we trust that they will lead to a comprehensive resolution of all the outstanding issues there. After so many years of conflict, the countries of the region, including a future Palestinian State, deserve to live in peace, security, harmony and prosperity.

This is the last statement that I will make to the General Assembly as the representative of my country, and I should like to conclude by reiterating my people's gratitude for the solidarity shown to us in our efforts

towards peace and development. The support which the peoples and Governments represented here have bestowed upon us, together with the strenuous work of the United Nations and its agencies, make us feel honoured, indebted and motivated.

The fruit that our peace process has manifestly borne in such a short time provides clear evidence of the validity and relevance of the system and of the fundamental, indispensable and inestimable importance of the efforts of the Guatemalan people within the country and of the unquestionable effectiveness of international friendship in the form of respectful, timely and effective cooperation in building a more democratic country and a more equitable and united world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Igor S. Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): There is no doubt that the twentieth century, which is now coming to a close, will leave a deep imprint on the history of the world. This has been an epoch of global transformation and social change, scientific discoveries and achievements. The realization of the idea of a universal world Organization, which has become the foundation uniting the entire international community, has indeed been one of the positive things about this century.

However, the twentieth century has witnessed the most severe upheavals. Millions of people have perished in the flames of world wars, revolutions and civil and ethnic conflicts. On a few occasions, humanity teetered on the brink of self-destruction, and the burden of outstanding problems it has left for the new era is a heavy one. We cannot resolve all these problems before the advent of the third millennium, but we are indeed duty bound to lay down the foundations for resolving them in the long-term and to start moving in that direction.

The most important thing we should do is to define the parameters of the world in which we are going to live. This lies at the core of the initiative put forward by the President of the Russian Federation, President Yeltsin, to develop a world concept for the twenty-first century. As a world Power and permanent member of the Security Council, Russia is fully conscious of its special role in and responsibility for world developments and stands for the establishment of a multipolar world built on a solid foundation of international law. Our country is pursuing in practice a multifaceted foreign policy with a view to establishing equitable and mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral relations with all the countries of the world and to strengthening international security and stability.

The world concept for the twenty-first century involves establishing a new culture which would aim to form a common system of values and models of behaviour. A world without wars and conflict, a world of democracy and prosperity must be the highest priority for all peoples and States. Every nation is entitled to its rightful place among other nations and to security on an equal footing in all its aspects, including in the political, military, economic and social areas.

How and through what mechanisms can this be achieved? Is there a body which can reflect the interests of all States in a balanced manner? The answer is obvious: it is the United Nations. From the outset, the United Nations Charter put the Organization at the service of all humankind. There is simply no other universal mechanism to regulate international relations.

We are fully aware of the danger posed by the threats and challenges facing our world today: the various manifestations of militant nationalism, separatism, terrorism and extremism, which know no borders. This is a common challenge which is claiming countless victims and wreaking destruction in various parts of the globe.

Aggressive separatism, which has become a growth medium for various extremist forces, has become one of the main sources of domestic conflict and regional instability. No one is immune to it. The international community and, above all, the United Nations, must decisively clamp down on any manifestations of separatism and strictly and consistently defend the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the inviolability of their borders. Outside

encouragement and support for separatist forces must be totally eradicated.

Recently, separatism has been increasingly merging with the monster of terrorism. We could even now, during this session, take a number of specific steps to stimulate practical international cooperation in combating terrorism. We must finalize the draft international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. I therefore suggest that we should develop and adopt a declaration of principles for cooperation between States on combating terrorism more vigorously. It is the States' bounden duty to protect their citizens against terrorist attacks and to prevent activities from taking place in their territory that are aimed at organizing such acts against the citizens of other countries. Russia therefore supports the initiative to convene, under United Nations auspices, a conference or a special session of the General Assembly next year on combating terrorism. Such an event would give a powerful political impetus to the struggle against terrorism at a global level.

The capabilities of the United Nations should also be used more efficiently in the fight against drug-related threats and organized crime. Only through joint efforts that are also in strict compliance with the rules of international law can we defeat this evil.

The founding fathers of the United Nations made provision for a law-based response to violations of peace and security. The international community can take also coercive measures, but this should be done in accordance with the Charter and following a decision by the Security Council. Unlawful means can only undermine rightful ends. It is from this very perspective that we assess such doctrines as that of humanitarian intervention. In general, we should take an extremely careful approach to coercive measures; what is more, we must not allow them to turn into a repressive mechanism for influencing States and peoples that are not to the liking of some.

Of course, evolution of the international situation means that it is appropriate for existing rules of international law to be developed and adapted to prevailing conditions, but this should be done through collective discussion and the adoption of appropriate decisions, not as a fait accompli and not working from scratch: it should be based on valid rules of international law. This is precisely what Russia had in mind with its initiative to consider at the Millennium Summit legal aspects of the use of force in international relations in the era of globalization. We invite all countries to a broad and open dialogue on this issue.

Much has been said in recent years about the reform of the United Nations, which is only natural. Life is an evolving process and, as times change, any system will need to be updated. What objectives future reform should pursue is another matter. In our view, reform means, first and foremost, the adoption of a package of measures to enhance the role of the United Nations in the world arena. The Organization should be ready to respond in a timely and appropriate way to the challenges that globalization presents to mankind. We must give serious thought to how to enhance the efficiency of the Security Council and how to make that principal organ of the United Nations more representative through the inclusion of influential new members, including — and this is absolutely indispensable — developing countries. This would help maintain the overall balance in the system of international relations, especially when the use of force, bypassing the Security Council, continues. It is also beyond doubt that preservation of the right of veto of permanent members is indispensable for meaningful and efficient work in the Council.

Generally speaking, the entire system of international organizations needs sensible and responsible reform. At the same time, the United Nations must remain a focal point of the international community's efforts to settle the most burning problems of the day. The issue of strengthening the authority of the United Nations after it has been seriously and painfully tested by the Balkan and Iraq crises is at the very top of the agenda at the current session of the General Assembly. First of all, we must continue strenuous efforts to restore the role of the Security Council in world affairs.

We have managed through joint efforts to bring the settlement of the Kosovo problem back within the legal and political framework of the United Nations. Now we need jointly to strive for strict and consistent implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We cannot afford to let the re-emerging political process be undermined again, since that could become a tragedy for all of Europe and could once again bring the world to the brink of catastrophe. Equally urgent is the issue of post-conflict rehabilitation in the Balkans. The United Nations has an important role to play in meeting these challenges as well.

We all should draw serious lessons from recent crises. Non-legitimate methods of exerting power only exacerbate problems and result in even greater deadlock. Developments in the Middle East, where the peace process has of late acquired a new positive impetus,

clearly exemplify the optimal alternative, that of negotiated settlement.

Also on the agenda is the issue of improving sanctions regimes, to which the international community has frequently resorted over the past decade. Sanctions are an extreme measure. They must be applied only when other means of political influence have been exhausted and when the Security Council has established the existence of a threat to peace. The Council, for its part, should be guided by clear criteria for the imposition and the lifting of sanctions, and should not permit any free interpretation of the decisions it has adopted, much less permit the use of its decisions by anyone for selfish political or economic ends. It is necessary to take very serious account of the humanitarian implications of sanctions both for the population of the States subject to such sanctions and for third countries. The punishment of entire nations, especially for an indefinite time and indiscriminately, is inadmissible.

Peacemaking is one of the key areas of United Nations activities. During the past 50 years the Organization has acquired vast practical experience in this field. Having successfully survived intense disputes and ideological battles, peacemaking has proved its vital power and importance for securing world and regional stability. The evolution of the theory and practice of present-day peacemaking confirms that there is no alternative to maintaining the central role of the United Nations in this sphere. The encouragement of peacemaking and the strengthening of its legal basis in strict conformity with the fundamental principles of the Charter should become an important component of the concept of the world in the twenty-first century. Building up and modernizing the anti-crisis capability of the United Nations is a key prerequisite for tackling these tasks successfully. The top priority here is to begin truly using the system of stand-by agreements with the United Nations.

Taking into account the limited resources of the world Organization, and given the high demand for peacekeeping operations, cooperation and division of labour between the United Nations and regional structures has become a priority. It is of fundamental importance that such cooperation should be in strict accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter and should be fully consistent with the prerogatives of the Security Council.

For Russia, the question of peacemaking cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is far from theoretical. For many years, Russian peacemakers within the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have contributed to stabilizing the situations in Abkhazia, Georgia, in Tajikistan, and in Trans-Dniestria, Moldova. This testifies to the fact that the settlement of conflicts within the framework of the CIS is a priority for Russia. As before, we do not see any reasonable alternative to political settlement of these crisis situations, for which political will, patience and commitment to one's obligations are needed. We consider it important for the United Nations to continue to play a prominent role in finding solutions in Tajikistan and in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is called upon to play a central role in ensuring European security and stability, can and should be the main United Nations peacemaking partner in Europe. When this arrangement fails to work, not only do specific European countries suffer, but providing for global and continental security becomes complicated. In a broad sense, OSCE peacemaking parameters, ranging from conflict prevention to peacekeeping operations and post-conflict rehabilitation, should be defined in a charter on European security. Russia proposes too that the charter should also reflect such principles important for the future of Europeans as ensuring the security and the foundations of the relations between European and Euro-Atlantic organizations in this area. Then the charter will indeed become a kind of political constitution for the Europe of the twenty-first century. As the Istanbul summit of the OSCE, which is expected to adopt the charter, is approaching fast, we should press ahead with the formulation of a substantive document.

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia may become an important factor for stability on the Asian continent after the new positive impetus it received at the recent Almaty Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting of the founding States. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum, a venue for active dialogue on a broad spectrum of urgent international issues, is yet another example of the focus of the Asian countries on the formation of solid structures for security and cooperation on the continent.

It is necessary to enhance the potential of African regional and subregional organizations, which are acting in close cooperation with the United Nations to curb and cope with conflicts and humanitarian catastrophes emerging in Africa. It is the duty of the international

community to render every possible support to the African peoples.

While strengthening the legal and practical basis of peacemaking activities, special attention should be paid to what is commonly called the human rights dimension. This relates not only to measures to minimize human sufferings caused by armed conflicts, but also to efforts aimed at preventing humanitarian crises.

In this connection, I cannot fail to mention the unacceptable situation of countless thousands of people in the centre of Europe who, due to arbitrary actions by authorities, have found themselves deprived of their citizenship and of the right to use their native language and enjoy full rights in their State of residence. Civilized integration, rather than latent assimilation — this is the way out of the prevailing humanitarian situation in these countries. We welcome the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) aimed at eliminating violations of human rights and freedoms of the non-indigenous population of Latvia and Estonia. We hope that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will make her contribution to these efforts.

The risk of losing positive dynamics in the sphere of disarmament as a result of attempts to rely on unilateral power methods cannot but cause concern. If the political and legal fabric regulating international relations continues to disintegrate further, then trends to ensure national security through an arms race will become even stronger. Russia has consistently advocated the reduction and limitation of nuclear arsenals and strict compliance with the non-proliferation regime. For without this, ensuring strategic stability would prove impossible.

We realize the importance of early ratification of the START II Treaty and of the initiation of START III negotiations, under which Russia would be prepared, on a reciprocal basis, to agree to considerable further reduction of strategic offensive armaments. Naturally, this process will be feasible only if the existing agreements in this field, first of all the ABM Treaty, are strictly observed. We believe that the General Assembly should come out clearly in support of the preservation and observance of the ABM Treaty, which is a cornerstone of strategic stability, because unilateral actions aimed at undermining the time-tested regime established by this Treaty are fraught with extremely dangerous consequences. A collective search for political and diplomatic solutions is the alternative to military responses to the problems of proliferation. This is precisely the target of Russia's initiative concerning the global system of control over proliferation of missiles and missile technologies.

Substantive discussions on threats to international information security must also be continued within the framework and under the auspices of the United Nations. The time has come to reach, through joint efforts, a common understanding of such threats and of measures to reduce them.

The twentieth century has brought about economic globalization. All economies have become open and closely linked as a result of advances in science and technology. All these factors have provided a powerful impetus to social and economic development while creating their own specific problems. The gap between the industrial and the formerly colonial worlds has not only persisted but has begun to widen. Development assistance should remain a principal focus of future United Nations activities. Crises, primarily financial ones, have assumed an international character. We must draw the appropriate lessons and modernize the architecture of the world financial system. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should play a role here.

The expansion of human economic activities has brought about a globalization of both natural and man-made disasters, and this has become a major destabilizing global factor. The challenges related to the prevention of such disasters and the elimination of their consequences require that the most advanced technologies be used for the benefit of the world community as a whole. Why not consider, therefore, the establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of a specialized international emergency agency which would assume relevant functions?

A widely known saying reads: "It is much easier to win a war than a peace." The United Nations founders won the war and laid the foundations for peace. It is our duty to win this peace and to make it comprehensive and irreversible.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. James Victor Gbeho.

Mr. Gbeho (Ghana): Mr. President, I am pleased to join previous speakers in congratulating you and the

other members of the Bureau on your election to guide the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Given your vast diplomatic experience and personal attachment to the principles of the Charter, I have every hope that our deliberations under your guidance will be able to determine the necessary mechanisms for dealing with the numerous challenges facing our Organization as we move into the next century.

I also wish to express the deep sense of gratitude of my delegation to your predecessor, His Excellency Didier Opertti, who served with great distinction in the year which marked the implementation of reforms instituted by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to mould the Organization into a tool that can better fulfil the needs of Member States.

As we enter a new century, our Organization must make a realistic assessment of developments in the out-going century, especially in this last decade. Such an assessment will indicate that while global peace and security have been pursued relentlessly, they have not been easily nor fully achieved. The reasons are not hard to find.

The situation is aggravated by the multiplicity of conflicts that pervades the world, especially in Africa. Intrastate conflicts, rooted in ethnic, racial and religious intolerance, pose a threat to the security and stability of many States and regions. While we welcome the agreements to end the conflict in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the prolonged hostilities in Angola, Somalia, and lately in Kosovo, demonstrate that the international community is still grappling with serious challenges to peace and security.

In spite of such setbacks and disappointments, we must continue to maintain trust and confidence in the United Nations ability to achieve sustainable socio-economic development for Member States. But that confidence will be sustained only when the Organization is seen to be truly seeking the interest of all Member States, without exception. In this regard, Member States must give impetus to the reform process that we initiated a decade ago and maintain its dynamism. We also must accept that the core of the reform touches on the Security Council, whose decisions bind all Members of the Organization.

The Security Council must therefore not be allowed to become irrelevant. It should be reformed to ensure that it can undertake its responsibilities more effectively under the Charter. And this reform must be guided by the principles of democracy, sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical representation. In this connection, we wholly subscribe to the Non-Aligned Movement's statement on all aspects of the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council, complemented by the African position as expressed in the Harare declaration of June 1997. Africa's claim to at least two permanent seats should be adequately addressed, since Africa is the largest regional group in the Organization.

We would also like to reiterate the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement that a periodic review of the structure and functioning of the Security Council is necessary in order to ensure at all times that it responds more effectively to new challenges in international relations, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is only through a restructuring of the Council on these lines that this body can avoid selectivity in dealing with issues of international peace and security and sustainable development. The present unequal handling of the causes and management of conflicts is unacceptable since it indirectly allows some conflicts to drag on.

My delegation believes that we can succeed in our collective effort to achieve peace and prosperity in the next century if we begin to speak out boldly against some of the injustices on the international scene. We therefore reiterate our concern over the continued non-compliance with key United Nations resolutions that call for an end to the commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. It is our sincere conviction that the economic blockade of more than three decades' vintage against Cuba and the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation are a breach of international law and a violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Particularly, Ghana considers the extraterritorial effect of the Helms-Burton and D'Amato legislation an infringement on the territorial integrity of States and an impediment to international navigation and free trade. In this regard, we are concerned that the economic blockade continues to severely aggravate the plight of Cubans, especially the vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly.

Given the United States Government's recent sensitivity to the concerns of the international community, Ghana would like to urge it to seriously consider the resumption of indirect relations with Cuba. We are convinced that such contacts will yield desired results,

especially if they take place in the context of constructive dialogue with the Cuban Government.

Another area of concern to the international community has been the lingering disagreements with the great Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. My delegation welcomes the positive events of 5 April 1999, by which the two Libyan nationals arrived in the Netherlands for trial by a Scottish court, in connection with the Lockerbie incident. We therefore can do no less than to reiterate the position of the Group of African States at the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Council of the League of Arab States that, as a matter of urgency, the Security Council should move beyond a mere suspension to a complete lifting of the sanctions imposed against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, since Libya has cooperated fully and fulfilled all the requirements of the relevant resolutions.

No issue in recent memory has frustrated the international community more than the Middle East peace process. Last year, as the world marked the fiftieth anniversary of the forcible dispossession of the Palestinian people of their lands, homes and property, the Wye River Memorandum was agreed, offering a fresh impetus and hope for progress. However, subsequent events — characterized by prevarications, recriminations and bad faith — inhibited full implementation of the Memorandum. Even more painful has been the seeming helplessness of the international community in the face of such obvious injustice.

Ghana reiterates its unwavering support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to the establishment of an independent sovereign State with Jerusalem as its capital. Happily, recent changes in the political landscape of Israel offer grounds for renewed optimism. We thus share the conviction of the Palestinian leader, Chairman Yasser Arafat, that Mr. Ehud Barak's victory has raised hopes for peace throughout the region. We commend the bold initiative taken by the Israeli leader, soon after assuming office, to resume dialogue and reach a meeting of minds with the Palestinians. The challenge ahead is enormous but not insurmountable; it will require painful compromises on sensitive issues. We urge all parties to negotiate in good faith towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Ghana is proud of its participation and record in the peacekeeping efforts of the Organization in all regions of the world. The sacrifices in material resources and the costs in human terms have not been in vain, since the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building have been critical in assuring all of us of the global tranquillity necessary for sustained development.

My delegation believes therefore that the time has come for the international community to do in Africa as much as it has done in other areas, particularly the Balkans, to guarantee peace. We have seen in the past few months the kind of resources that the world has been willing and able to mobilize in the Balkans on short notice. We do not see the same response to the tragedies of Africa. African Member States feel discriminated against when the response of the international community to conflicts on the continent continues to be muted or lukewarm.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are indispensable for the preservation of world peace. Yet the lack of commitment and political will of the nuclear weapon countries continues to impede the process of nuclear disarmament. This is demonstrated by the failure of the three Preparatory Committee sessions for the 2000 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Against this background, my delegation reiterates the warning that the parties and non-parties to the NPT alike will not continue indefinitely to abide by the Treaty while the nuclear-weapon countries continue to ignore the calls of the international community to abide by their NPT commitments and pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The proliferation of conventional weapons, notably small and light weapons, is equally of concern, since they are the tools of violence and conflict in Africa. My delegation commends all the efforts aimed at securing international cooperation and coordination in the struggle against the accumulation, proliferation and widespread use of small arms. Naturally, we welcome the recent decision taken on small arms and light weapons by the heads of State of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at their recent summit in Algiers which, among others, called on OAU member States to adopt a coordinated approach to the problems posed by the illicit trafficking, circulation and proliferation of these arms.

We also urge all friends of Africa to support the implementation of the moratorium on the import, export

and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa, which aims at stemming the illicit traffic in these weapons in our subregion. My Government, in recognition of the need to address this problem and the related issue of the forced participation of children in armed conflicts, intends to jointly host with the Government of Canada a workshop aimed at building on the Mali moratorium and establishing a framework for keeping children out of conflicts. It is our hope that the support of the international community will be forthcoming when the time comes.

We are at the dawn of the new millennium, concluding a period in which the decolonization movement has brought about one of the century's signal transformations: that of more than 80 nations from colonial status to self-rule and membership of this Organization. This is a commendable achievement. Nevertheless, the goal of the Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism has not been realized, since 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remain on the agenda of this Assembly. We reiterate our continued belief in the right of all peoples to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and call on the administering, occupying or colonial Powers to cooperate with the relevant institutions of the United Nations for the speedy determination of self-rule.

While we congratulate the United Nations and ourselves for the commendable record in bringing colonies to self-rule, we cannot hide our deep disappointment at the recent turn of events in East Timor. Since a significant number of States Members of the United Nations are the product of self-determination, our Organization has a moral and political obligation to bring East Timor to self-rule. We call on both the United Nations and the administering Power, therefore, to take all measures necessary to restore peace and tranquility so that the true wishes of the people, as clearly expressed in the recent referendum, can be respected without further delay.

If we are concerned about subjugated territories, then we cannot remain silent over the continued plight of Western Sahara. The people of that territory must exercise true self-determination and we believe that, since the Polisario Front and Morocco have accepted the Secretary-General's programme on implementation of the Settlement Plan for the referendum in the territory, then the promised referendum should be held without further delay. We call on all stakeholders to demonstrate good will and fairness by ensuring a free and fair referendum.

The phenomenon of extreme and widespread poverty in the midst of plenty in the world is a serious indictment of the conscience and political will of the international community. Compared to the social situation at the onset of this century, the next century begins with an even bleaker outlook. More and more people are living at or below the poverty line, while individual security and well-being continue to face disruptions from civil conflict and disease. Malnutrition, malaria, AIDS, diarrheal and communicable diseases continue to kill millions of people, stifling the economic potential of large segments of populations. HIV/AIDS alone has killed in the last decade more Africans than have all the conflicts and other diseases. It is a frightening thought that millions of Africa's young and productive populations will be killed by this pandemic in the next few years. What development and progress are we talking about, then, if we will have no human resource to implement them?

The continued deterioration of economic conditions in Africa poses a challenge to all of us, especially as all statistics show that the world's poor continue to wallow in abject poverty with only a dim hope of improvement in their living standards. One of the main requirements of our current session of the General Assembly is therefore to select for implementation those measures that will enable developing countries to grow out of poverty in a sustainable environment.

My delegation continues to be concerned about the deterioration of official development assistance, even though we note with gratitude the decision by three industrialized countries to increase their gross national product allocation to aid, and the steadfastness of Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, which are providing more than 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. Official development assistance resources need to be increased to levels which, combined with the commitment of developing countries to deepening economic reforms, lead to early achievement of sustainability in growth, poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability.

If we must break the cycle of crises, poverty and instability, particularly in Africa, and if we must create the conditions for sustainable debt management on the continent, the creditor countries and institutions must be prepared to wipe out the debts of the countries involved in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative and begin the new millennium on a clean slate.

In this connection, we note with appreciation the recently announced decision and support of the G-7 countries in broadening, deepening and accelerating the HIPC Initiative. While we express our satisfaction, let me hasten to urge that care be taken to avoid the imposition of additional difficulties on HIPC countries in the process, such as are likely to befall HIPC gold-producing countries if the proposal to sell off some of the gold reserves of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to meet part of the cost of the expanded HIPC Initiative is followed through. Similarly, we pray all creditor countries not to present debt relief in conditionalities that would compel debtor countries to give up the relief option.

In these days of globalization and trade liberalization, the developed countries must also open their markets to goods from developing countries, including providing greater access for the latter's agricultural produce and services. The developed countries must, in addition, implement their trade obligations in the spirit that all must benefit from the trade rules. In this regard, the twin concepts of liberalization and globalization must afford developing countries economic justice in terms of markets and activities. They should not turn developing countries into perpetual consumers because of limited volume of goods and market access.

As we approach the next century, we know we cannot build the kind of future we desire without the full participation of women. Although much has been achieved in advancing the status of women through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, a lot still remains to be done. Discrimination, denial and violence against women and girls persist, embedded in cultural, traditional and religious practices around the world, despite the increasing public debate on gender issues.

Gender mainstreaming into national, regional and international policies and programmes, as well as the provision of adequate resources for implementation as spelt out in the Beijing Platform for Action, represents one of the crucial strategies for attaining gender equity and equality.

But in the final analysis, the critical step in protecting women's rights is to empower women through education and increased awareness of their rights. In this connection, let me express my delegation's appreciation for the adoption of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which, among others, recognizes the competence of CEDAW to receive and consider communications submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals, under the jurisdiction of a State Party, claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention by the State Party. We are happy that after so many years, women now have an effective instrument in their hands to fight discrimination, and we urge the adoption of the draft optional protocol to the Convention.

This year, we also commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption by this Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by which all Member States pledged to promote and protect the rights of children. Despite the Convention, however, the rights of children continue to be violated through child labour, commercial sex, exploitation, early marriage and the use of children in armed conflicts. This situation indicates that mere ratification of the Convention is not enough. Children would be protected and their rights promoted only by a conscious effort on the part of Governments to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention.

The United Nations and other international organizations are justifiably preoccupied with governance because it is the basis of all progress. The United Nations must therefore play a fundamental and central role in the re-design of global governance and in global governance itself. It cannot do so, however, when it is constantly requested to do more for all people while it is being given less and less resources. It will certainly lack the institutional framework for global leadership when national leaders fail to stand up for it or its enduring values. Given the onerous responsibilities of the Organization and the expectations of the Member States, the timely, full and unconditional payment of assessed contributions would be an expression of our commitment and support as the Organization prepares to meet the emerging challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this connection, it is our firm conviction that the regular and peacekeeping budgets of the Organization should be determined solely by the General Assembly in accordance with each country's ability to pay, among other factors, as objectively evaluated within the Organization. Unilateral decisions that worsen the financial situation of the United Nations must be avoided.

We have an opportunity to draw lessons from our immediate past history and to shape a new millennium in our best image, just as the great statesmen of this century did in the aftermath of the Second World War. We would

not be true to ourselves if we sought refuge in half measures. We must use our best endeavours to build a new world for a new millennium we can be proud of. Our collective wisdom demands this. Our civilized values insist on this. We can do no less.

The President: I call on Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Halonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you upon your election as President of the General Assembly. The European Union gives you its full support and cooperation throughout this session. Your predecessor, Minister Opertti, also deserves our appreciation. I would also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the skill with which he has steered this Organization. The European Union pledges its support also to him, as well as its full commitment to the United Nations.

I should like to welcome the three new members of the United Nations, the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, into our global family.

In overall terms substantial progress has been made in human development. However, its speed and extent have been uneven. The United Nations has a primary role in the advancement of human development. Implementation can be carried out only through close cooperation among different actors: the United Nations, its Member States, its specialized agencies, international financial institutions, regional organizations and civil society.

We need an efficient and effective United Nations which has a stable financial basis and a full commitment from all its Member States. This also means the full, prompt and unconditional payment of contributions to the United Nations by all. Unilateral decisions and actions to the contrary are not allowed.

The globalization of the world economy is an unavoidable process. We see the need to put the globalization process and macroeconomic policies in closer touch with the lives of ordinary people. We consider this to be one of the challenges facing the world community on the threshold of the new millennium. The United Nations is uniquely positioned to provide intellectual leadership to ensure that the advantages of economic globalization are equally shared by the world's population. Increasing interdependence must work for people.

The nature of crises has also changed. Most of today's conflicts take place within and not between States. We face situations where there are serious democracy deficiencies and where human rights are strongly violated, in particular the rights of the minorities. In the worst cases, States with their traditional institutions have ceased to exist, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan described so well in his opening statement.

At the threshold of a new millennium, we should intensify our efforts to prevent these situations. We should start to consider how to elaborate some criteria and rules aimed at the prevention of humanitarian catastrophes or alleviation of profound human suffering.

The international community needs to develop solutions and responses to these new and unexpected challenges. The international community must play a proactive role in conflict prevention. There are several forms of action that have a useful effect in preventing conflicts. These include strengthening democracy and respect for human rights, as well as progress in economic and social development through good governance. The most important factor in conflict prevention is, however, a democratic society which is on a steady foundation and which guarantees human security in its widest possible sense. Democratic societies do not go to war with each other, and they are also internally more stable.

Every human being is entitled to enjoy his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights are essential in the maintenance of international peace and security, economic development and social equality. The United Nations has a primary role in the promotion of universal respect for human rights. These must be further integrated in all United Nations activities. The promotion of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is central also to the activities of the European Union.

The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us of the need to advance the rights of the most vulnerable: children. The European Union welcomes the recent adoption of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour. All States should ratify the Convention as soon as possible and implement it effectively. The protection of children affected by armed

conflicts also requires constant attention. It is imperative to adopt without delay the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on involvement of children in armed conflict.

The European Union is concerned about discrimination against women. We underline the importance of the international human rights instruments designed to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women. The adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women will be a historic event in this session. The European Union calls on all States to give serious consideration to ratifying it.

Trafficking in human beings violates many of the most basic human rights. Most victims of this practice are women and children. Concerted international action is required in the fight against trafficking. The European Union supports the work done to develop international standards to prevent these crimes and to punish the perpetrators. Measures must also be taken to help the victims of this type of exploitation.

Racism is a universal problem. Thus, the elimination of all forms of racial intolerance should be the responsibility of every State. We also want to underline the input by civil society and non-governmental organizations in this field.

The European Union is committed to opposing the death penalty. We call on all States that still impose the death penalty to progressively restrict the offences for which it may be used, and we insist that it be carried out according to minimum standards. As a first step, a moratorium on executions should be established. The final aim must remain the complete abolition of the death penalty. The European Union will actively pursue this matter in this session.

No doubt, sustainable development in all areas enhances crisis prevention. People are at the centre of our concerns in sustainable development.

The Buenos Aires Plan of Action sets out an ambitious and precise timetable to follow in future negotiations on the threat of climate change. However, there are still important outstanding questions, such as the Kyoto mechanisms and capacity-building of developing countries, as well as the transfer of technology. In the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, our common goal is to promote sustainable forest management worldwide. The European Union also notes the need for international coordination on oceans and seas.

The European Union is fully committed to reducing extreme poverty in developing countries. We support them in their efforts to implement the international commitments for sustainable development. International cooperation, as well as ownership by partner countries, is needed to achieve the common goals.

Relieving the unsustainable debt burden of the poorest countries requires faster relief through the programme for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. The European Union confirms its full commitment to the high-level discussion on financing for development. We expect this process to increase the political will to implement internationally agreed strategies for sustainable development.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains a cornerstone of global security. It is imperative that the four States that have not yet done so join the NPT. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As we are approaching the Conference on the CTBT to be held in October, the European Union calls upon all States to sign and ratify the Treaty.

The European Union welcomes the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. As the international community moves towards the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines worldwide, the recent use of these weapons is highly deplorable. We must voice concern about the misery that anti-personnel mines continue to cause to the civilian population. The European Union continues to be the main contributor to demining programmes worldwide.

We are deeply concerned about the impact, accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons, and we have intensified our efforts to address this problem. The United Nations conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects should establish a strong programme of action for international cooperation.

Terrorism constitutes a threat to internal and international security. Therefore, the European Union reaffirms its unreserved condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and continues to support initiatives to suppress

it. We call upon all countries to sign and to ratify the international anti-terrorism conventions. We hope that the conventions on the suppression of terrorist financing and on the acts of nuclear terrorism can be adopted by the General Assembly by the end of this year. The European Union will look carefully into the proposal of Egypt and others to develop further the idea of a United Nations conference on terrorism.

As the Secretary-General has said, it would be the ultimate crime to miss the chance for peace and condemn people to the misery of war. Even the best plans for prevention can fail, and the international community has to address armed conflicts. These conflicts have human, social and environmental consequences which cannot be repaired.

The international community has a long tradition of solving crises by peacekeeping operations. Now that the nature of crises has changed, additional means are needed. Peacekeeping operations cannot meet all the requirements without increased efforts for civilian crisis management. In most crises, societies and their structures are completely destroyed.

The international community has called for repair and rehabilitation. Humanitarian assistance alone is not enough. Reconstruction of societies requires the presence of civilian police and other administrators from all fields of civil activity. In most cases it is difficult to find the right tools to cope with conflicts.

The European Union strongly emphasizes civilian crisis management. We hope that it will be more often resorted to as the principal means to manage and solve crises. We will work actively to develop further this concept. The European Union is in the process of improving its crisis management capabilities, keeping in mind that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the United Nations and the Security Council.

Regional organizations have a key role in international security. For their success, cooperation with the United Nations is essential. The European Union thanks the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen this cooperation and urges him to continue this work.

The crisis in Kosovo requires concerted efforts. The European Union supports the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). With the adoption of this resolution, the United Nations regained its relevance as far as Kosovo is concerned. We also support the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR in their efforts to ensure peace, democracy and security in Kosovo. The United Nations needs the means and cooperation of all to fulfil its mandate.

At the height of the Kosovo crisis the European Union launched the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Its aim is to address the questions of democracy, human rights, economic reconstruction and security in a comprehensive and durable manner. We would welcome the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia joining the Stability Pact as a full and equal participant and beneficiary. The current regime of Mr. Milosevic is responsible for its present isolation, and we look forward to welcoming democratic change inside Serbia. Meanwhile, we are searching for ways in which Kosovo and the Republic of Montenegro could be made beneficiaries of the Pact.

In Kosovo there is an urgent need to put an end to human suffering. We are concerned about the violence towards minorities, which has resulted in a large number of Serbs and Roma people leaving Kosovo. Urgent restoration of the rule of law is extremely important.

The Middle East remains a top priority for the common foreign and security policy of the European Union. We find it encouraging that the Middle East peace process has regained momentum and that the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have started again. Negotiations are the only way to find a just and lasting solution to this conflict. We welcome the signing of the memorandum on the implementation of the Wye River Agreement. The European Union has consistently assured the parties of its readiness to assist them in their search for peace.

All tracks of the peace process should now be activated. We urge the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli Governments to engage in direct talks. The relevant Security Council resolutions form an internationally accepted basis for peace.

It is also important to make progress on the multilateral track. Peace can, and must be, rooted in close regional cooperation. The multilateral track and the Barcelona process provide good opportunities in this regard.

The European Union warmly welcomes the result of the popular consultation of the East Timorese people on 30 August 1999. Indonesia's commitment to the full

implementation of the relevant Agreements is imperative. We are committed to seeing the people of East Timor enjoy the independence which they have freely chosen. The European Union pays tribute to the United Nations for the organization of the popular consultation and lauds the courage and extraordinary work of the personnel of the United Nations Mission in East Timor.

We condemn in the strongest terms the atrocities in East Timor. The Government of Indonesia retains a responsibility for security in the Territory.

We fully support Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) and welcome the early deployment of the multinational force. We also welcome the participation of Asian States in this force. Order, security and the rule of law must be restored immediately. The attitude of the European Union towards Indonesia will depend on the implementation of the undertakings given by the President of Indonesia. They should be implemented without delay and without conditions.

We have agreed, for a period of four months, on an embargo on the export of military equipment and other equipment which might be used for internal repression or terrorism. The European Union has also suspended its bilateral military cooperation with Indonesia.

The European Union stresses the urgent priority to remedy the grave humanitarian situation. We will provide further humanitarian assistance to those in need.

We also support the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene a special session of the Commission on Human Rights. We call for an investigative mission by the Commission.

East Timor's independence must proceed without delay, as provided for in the 5 May Agreements. The Member States of the European Union look forward to recognizing East Timor once the process towards independence is completed.

We also emphasize our desire to see a strong, democratic and united Indonesia.

The European Union continues to fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General towards a negotiated political settlement of the question of Cyprus. We urge the two leaders concerned to accept the invitation to negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General has said that the United Nations cannot rest until all of Africa is at peace. One third of sub-Saharan Africa is presently involved in armed conflicts. The victims of these conflicts are overwhelmingly civilians. The European Union strongly appeals to the parties in these and other ongoing conflicts to respect human rights and to cooperate with the humanitarian organizations. We will continue to make all efforts to provide assistance to the victims.

Concrete measures have been taken to strengthen African ownership and capacity to focus on conflict prevention and resolution. The European Union is supporting, in close cooperation with the United Nations, the capacity of African organizations in the field of conflict resolution and peacekeeping.

A stable and democratic political environment is indispensable for sustainable development. The EU welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and we look forward to its effective follow-up.

The first EU-Africa summit is scheduled to take place in April 2000. This summit is a clear signal of the close cooperation between the EU and the African countries aimed at addressing various, even delicate, political and socio-economic issues.

One of the principal objectives of the Amsterdam Treaty is to strengthen the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. To achieve this we have created new units and instruments to deal with the increasing challenges in the field of foreign policy. In accordance with the Amsterdam Treaty, we are going to consistently improve our capacity for conflict prevention and crisis management. The EU will increase its ability to contribute to international peace and security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, I should like to say a few words about the next millennium. The Millennium Assembly should give new direction to the renewal of the United Nations. The EU supports the overall theme "The United Nations in the twenty-first century", proposed by the Secretary-General. In the view of the EU, the focus should be on poverty eradication in the context of globalization.

Poverty eradication is a major challenge for the international community now that the world's population is reaching six billion, with nearly a quarter of that number still living in poverty. It is one of the greatest challenges left pending at the end of the twentieth century.

With the new millennium, we should also recognize the increased importance of civil society in the search for solutions. This is one of the cornerstones of the new era in international cooperation.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.7

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 1999, 3.00 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Earthquake in China

The President: I wish to convey to members of the Assembly that I have learned with shock and sadness of the earthquake that struck near Taipei yesterday. May I, on behalf of the members of the Assembly and on my own behalf extend to the people of the Taiwan Province of China our heartfelt sympathy at this time of trial.

Address by Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Republic of Venezuela

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Chávez Frías, President of the Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Venezuela, His Excellency Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chávez Frías (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I wish to express my very great pleasure at speaking for the first time in this world forum as head of State and at greeting its members on behalf of the people of Venezuela and my Government, and particularly at speaking at this session of the General Assembly, the last of this century and millennium, which, for us, adds special meaning to the event.

My presence here also affords me an opportunity to express some ideas on the times and circumstances in which we are now living, all of us worldwide but also, and a little more specifically, about times and circumstances in my own country. These are times and circumstances, Mr. President and members, which of course we share with you.

A few years ago, when the Berlin Wall fell, I think someone said that peace had broken out. I truly believe that that expression covers a series of phenomena which began to surface at that time and subsequently evolved and developed to become part of the global scenario. In my view, this rapid emergence of phenomena, simultaneously all round the world, each of them with so many distinguishing characteristics, has made it more difficult to understand, appreciate and realistically perceive what is actually happening in the world today.

Many analysts of that time spoke of quantum leaps. I believe that a quantum leap is indeed under way; there is an ongoing process of universal change, mutation even. I also believe that we must sharpen our ability to analyse and observe this phenomenon — open conflicts, resurgent nationalisms, racial and religious conflicts — which are occurring in a world that is undergoing processes of fusion while at the same time undergoing dangerous and alarming processes of fission. We are entering the new

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century with these signs around us which at one and the same time are cause for concern and reason for optimism at the changes unfolding. Actually, there are many praiseworthy things about the century that is closing, but there are also many things worthy of condemnation and from which we should learn our lesson so that they do not recur.

Within that process of universal change, there is a country small in size, a nearby country — Venezuela — that faces its own changes; a country that is undertaking its own irrevocable and necessary changes; a country that is being reborn from its own ashes; a country that is once again raising the flag of true, authentic democracy. I shall speak a few words here about that country, my country, our country, your country: Venezuela. Venezuela, blessed by the hand of God; Venezuela, in the very north with an outstanding geographic location; Venezuela, full of incalculable natural wealth; Venezuela, which has one of the world's largest oil reserves and mineral resources of all kinds, such as gold, diamonds, bauxite and iron ore; Venezuela, which has water; Venezuela, which has fertile soil; Venezuela, which has scarcely 20 million inhabitants for almost 1 million square kilometres. But 80 per cent of the inhabitants of this wealth-filled country are poor.

For many years it was said of Venezuela that it was a model of democracy in the world and in Latin America. However, today it is undergoing a process of profound change, a crisis unprecedented in our history — a moral crisis, an economic crisis, a political crisis, a social crisis — which has brought it to dangerous extremes, with explosive forces that have been building for decades.

Even so, in Venezuela we have found a peaceful way out of the morass, the tragedy. We have discovered a way that is fully democratic. We have encouraged changes in Venezuela towards respect for human rights, as is right and proper, because, however tragic the situation, however urgent the need for change, never, in our view, should human rights, respect for freedom of expression, respect for the intrinsic values of the individual, respect for freedom of the press and respect for freedom of thought be set aside. The Venezuelan people has arisen from its own ashes.

I should also like to add — and you, Mr. President, and members undoubtedly know this — that the Venezuelan people is a people with a great historical legacy: it is the birthplace of Simón Bolívar, the Liberator, one of the greats of the millennium. Venezuela carries in its essence the seed of democracy, of fraternity and solidarity. We must therefore acknowledge the ability of Venezuelan people, which we represent here in this Assembly, to find peaceful and democratic solutions to a profound crisis which in other places and other eras, would have given rise to the violent and regrettable acts that have submerged many peoples in fratricidal conflict for years and even decades at a time.

We know that the world has had a great deal of news about Venezuela in recent months, some of it a little disturbing as a result of the confusion and speed of the changes. I thank representatives for allowing me a few minutes to take the opportunity to assure the entire world that in Venezuela there was respect, is respect and will continue to be respect for a democratic process which emanates from the will of the people. For example, last December there were elections in Venezuela, which produced a positive result for democracy. We won the elections with almost 60 per cent of the popular vote.

Subsequently, on 2 February this year, the very day that we arrived at the Government Palace, we did something which had never before happened in my country: we called for a national referendum. In that referendum, held on 25 April, the country voted for the electoral path leading to a constituent assembly. Ninety-two per cent said "Yes", and on 25 July there were open elections, in which all political and social sectors participated, with absolute freedom of expression, freedom of criticism and freedom of the press, the likes of which had never occurred in my country.

The National Constituent Assembly that resulted from that electoral process consists of 131 Venezuelan men and women, representing the broadest segments of society, including indigenous peoples, because for the first time in Venezuela's history a group of aborigines represent the indigenous peoples of Venezuela in the great Assembly. The Assembly members have been working together for a month and a half on a new national constitution in a mechanism of cooperation. The entire country is promoting progress towards this new Constitution; for the sake of the democracy we are defending and advocating, it will be approved only by the country. It will not enter into force until it is approved by the Venezuelans in a new referendum, which we hope will be held in November, or at the latest in December.

In other words, when the new century dawns next year Venezuela will have a new political project, a fundamental new charter as the foundation of the new

Republic and of truly legitimate executive power governing by democracy — as Abraham Lincoln said, for the people and by the people. We will have a genuine judicial power, which we had lost in the past few years owing to corruption. This judicial power will administer justice. We rely on true legislative power to respond to the calls and needs of the Venezuelan people.

We also propose the establishment of a fourth power — moral power — to combat corruption, the mother of all Venezuelan crises of recent years, and to fight for education, especially for children. We further propose an electoral power to achieve a balance of power. There will be a division of powers, particularly legitimate powers, with the profound popular content of true democracy.

We are also promoting a new economic model for Venezuela. For 20 years we experienced a terrible crisis that produced the breakdown of a country, the breakdown of a model. We are now promoting a humanistic, productive, competitive and diversified economic model, based on the great potential of our country and incorporating the world currents of a new international economic order, with greater justice and a human face, which will facilitate satisfying the needs of the human being. This must be one of the fundamental goals of any economic process.

In just over six months we have been able to come here to tell the world of our successes — small successes, but they presage what is going to happen in Venezuela. We have undertaken an economic revitalization, respecting all economic freedoms. In a healthy coexistence between the State and the market, we have been gaining ground in the macroeconomic area. We have started to bring down inflation; maintained our international reserves; helped raise the price of a barrel of oil, in cooperation with the other oil-producing countries; and brought about an exchange balance. We have also been revitalizing some production sectors, and we are calling on global investors to invest in various petrochemical, gas, touristic, industrial and agricultural projects and enterprises. We are thus building a new economic model.

We are also building a new society based on public morality in respect of human rights. I shall give an example, small, but one which says a lot about what is happening in Venezuela in terms of the social order. Barely three days ago the 1999-2000 school year began. This year the school matriculation — that is, the number of students in public schools — increased by 25 per cent. As a result of a model of privatization of education, and of the poverty that has been invading the social strata, many children and young people did not go to school; they could not pay the fees, nor could they pay for school supplies. This year we have opened up the schools and we have been repairing them. Now we are very happy to tell the world that in just six months the number of children and young people starting a new school year has increased by 25 per cent. Furthermore, attention to education has gone beyond being one of the principal national priorities; it is now a matter of States.

The same can be said of health. We have activated a special plan which we call "Project Bolivar 2000". For six months we have been dealing with Venezuelans' greatest needs, such as health, road repairs and opening ways of penetration and activation of some sectors of microenterprises. We have set up a people's bank to provide microcredit especially to bring about the recovery of the economy, the microeconomy. We have created a unique social fund to promote solutions basically for health and education.

As can be seen, we are promoting a genuine process of transition: politically, socially, economically and, above all, ethically. A new Venezuela is being born, born to present itself to the world free and sovereign, ready to take up firmly the flags of a new world, a fairer world. We are in solidarity with the struggles of the world. The world of the century to come must be much better than the world of the twentieth century which is ending. We call out for justice for the peoples of the third world, for equality and human development. We appeal for the integration of peoples and for peace. Only a country revitalized from within can be incorporated by its own strength into the international relations of a modern world, such as the world which is dawning.

In this part of South America, Venezuela is being reborn and offering the world its heart, its arms of integration. I give a special salute to all the peoples of the Latin American continent and the Caribbean, Central America, North America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania. We must continue together, with a new sense of brotherhood, to struggle for a better world.

In this my first statement to the General Assembly, in the last session of the century, when we are preparing for the Millennium Assembly, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and all the world representatives gathered here at the United Nations, because we are aware of the great effort being made to reform and perfect the machinery to

achieve peace, brotherhood and solidarity in a world that is, as I said at the beginning, undergoing profound change.

These words come from my heart and go out to the entire world in the name of a people who are themselves being reborn — the Venezuelan people — with our best wishes that each day we may find greater strength and come closer to attaining — as I said before — the path to peace, brotherhood, development, justice and self-determination. Let us not say as someone else has said that peace has broken out. Rather, let us say that in the next few years we may all be able to proclaim loudly that peace, democracy and development have triumphed.

I send a warm embrace to you all on behalf of the people of Simon Bolivar, the people of Venezuela.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Venezuela for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Argentine Republic, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Menem *(interpretation from Spanish):* We are pleased that an important figure in Namibia's attainment of independence has the responsibility of conducting this session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his skill in presiding over the previous session of the General Assembly.

After 10 years as President of Argentina, and with my constitutional mandate about to end, I should like to share with the Assembly the transformations that Argentina has experienced during this time, in a world which has also been transformed.

In the past 10 years we have experienced a change of Copernican dimensions. It started with the recovery of democracy. Since that time we have built a stable political system based on the popular will and respect for the rule of law. We have made respect for human rights a sacred value. We are at peace with all our neighbours, with which we have now undertaken a robust integration process. We have put an end to proliferation policies and have actively committed ourselves to peacekeeping operations. We have developed an open and free economy, worked to combat poverty and inequality of opportunity and fought discrimination in all its forms. In short, we have recovered and embraced the high values of our culture, which are the essence of the Charter of the United Nations and which we hope to bring with us into the twenty-first century.

At the regional level, which is our natural sphere of interest, we have solved all outstanding border and demarcation issues with the Republic of Chile and thus opened the way for fruitful integration. We have established consultation and coordination mechanisms with Brazil and Chile on security and defence issues. We are convinced that security depends much more on friendship and cooperation with our neighbours than on what we spend on weapons. As one of the guarantors of the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, we contributed to the peace agreement between Peru and Ecuador. We are working tirelessly for the consolidation of democracy and development in our region.

In the field of disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we have taken the following steps. On 28 November 1990 we signed the Foz do Iguaçú Joint Declaration, which consolidated the policy of nuclear transparency with Brazil, and since then we have developed a common peaceful and non-proliferation nuclear policy. Argentina acceded to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, in 1994; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1995; and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in 1998. We are also members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and in 1993 Argentina joined the Missile Technology Control Regime.

In the field of space activities, the National Commission for Space Activities has worked with the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on the SAC-B satellite mission, the placement in orbit and operation of the SAC-A satellite technology mission and the forthcoming launch of the SAC-C satellite mission, Argentina's first Earth observation satellite. We have also started some ambitious projects in this field with Brazil, as well as with Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

We have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we are working on a monitoring mechanism for the Biological Weapons Convention. In this context, Argentina joined the Australian Group on 11 December 1992.

Argentina's self-restraint in the development of nuclear weapons is recognized as an example by the international community.

On 14 September this year Argentina ratified the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

At the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) summit in Ushuaia, Argentina, on 24 July 1998, MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile were declared a zone of peace and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. A commitment was also made to declare the area a zone free of anti-personnel landmines.

We believe that all States must renounce nuclear weapons and give unequivocal guarantees that their nuclear capability and most advanced technology are exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Allow me once more to refer to the pending sovereignty dispute concerning the Malvinas Islands. One of the first measures we adopted upon taking office was to re-establish diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom, in February 1990. A new stage was thereby begun in which the ties between the two countries were taken to their highest level in history. This was reaffirmed by my recent visit, as President, to the United Kingdom and that of His Royal Highness Prince Charles to Argentina. Since then, while reaffirming our sovereignty rights and motivated by a spirit of reconciliation, we have worked harmoniously with the United Kingdom on various matters relating to the South Atlantic, such as the rebuilding of a climate of mutual trust in the area, the preservation of live marine resources, the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons, the resumption of flights between the continent and the Malvinas Islands, and the access of persons carrying Argentine identity documents to the Malvinas Islands.

Argentina is a country that is proud of its cultural diversity. Our Constitution establishes as a national goal the recovery of the Malvinas Islands while guaranteeing the strictest respect for the way of life of their inhabitants. I am convinced that the conditions exist for Argentina and the United Kingdom to begin without further delay a dialogue towards a definitive solution of the sovereignty dispute, thus fulfilling the numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Argentina is the sixth-largest troop contributor to the Organization. At this time, we are involved in 10 of the 17 current operations, including those in Kosovo and East Timor. We have also incorporated personnel from other Latin American countries into our troops.

In Argentina, the defence and promotion of human rights is a State policy. That is why we have actively participated in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, as a way to put an end to the culture of impunity.

The numerous humanitarian missions in which "White Helmets" have been deployed in South America, Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Caucasus are a reflection of the success of this initiative, which I put forward in 1993. Argentina agrees with the Secretary-General that the "White Helmets" can provide assistance, in close partnership with the Blue Helmets, in conflict situations.

Argentina supports a world economy of open markets. However, we see the re-emergence of hidden forms of protectionism. This is why we call on all States, in particular to the most developed ones, to take part in the "millennium round", with the goal of attaining an open, multilateral system that excludes no sector of economic activity.

As evidence of our concern regarding environmental issues, in November 1998 Argentina hosted the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which adopted the Buenos Aires Plan of Action. During the fifth ministerial meeting of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, which was held in Buenos Aires in October 1998, a Plan of Action was

adopted for the first time in order to carry out the objectives of the Zone, which include the protection of the environment and of living resources.

The international community must urgently prepare contingency plans to face the year 2000 problem in such a way that essential community services are not affected.

Since 1 January 1999, Argentina has been an elected member of the Security Council. I would like briefly to share some thoughts with the Assembly.

The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of peace cannot be irreplaceable, and its authority must be strengthened.

The Council must work in cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations system and with regional organizations in order to carry out its tasks effectively.

We have a responsibility towards the men and women who make up the Blue Helmets, as well as towards those who perform humanitarian work in conflict situations. It is our obligation to protect them. We call upon countries to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Concerning the reform of the Security Council, Argentina supports the creation of a system of non-discriminatory, open rotation. It would be unfair and unrealistic, at the beginning of a new millennium, to multiply the privileges and discriminatory practices that came about only as a result of war in 1945. Therefore, no new categories of membership should be introduced in regions where those categories do not exist, especially if tradition and history do not warrant it.

Finally, I am convinced that the United Nations is called upon to play an even more relevant role in the twenty-first century. Argentina, which is now to be among the 15 main countries of the Organization, will participate with the same conviction as always in the realization of the noble objectives of the Charter.

Once again, I thank you, Sir, and all the Members of the United Nations. After 10 years and six months, I bid you farewell for the last time.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Saúl Menem, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dzurinda (Slovakia): I would like to express my sincere congratulations, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and to extend my best wishes for a successful conduct of the deliberations and work of this body.

I wish also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his leadership and his personal contribution to the achievements of the fifty-third session.

The United Nations was created over 50 years ago in specific political circumstances marked by enthusiasm brought about by the end of the Second World War. Its establishment was a very important step towards a new global order, although the political situation dominated by super-Power rivalry over next several decades prevented it from using its potential to the full. The current international political situation is much more propitious for pursuing the original purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Following the end of the bipolar division of the world, we have witnessed new political processes that have profoundly changed the political landscape. An ever- growing number of countries are embracing democratic principles and implementing them in practice. This should be emphasized, especially in a forum such as the General Assembly, because the spread of democracy gives momentum to the work of the United Nations and stimulates the expansion of its activities throughout the world.

A growing number of countries are acknowledging their share of the global responsibility for a better life on our planet and for the wise exploitation of its resources. In this era of globalization and interdependence, the United Nations plays a unique and irreplaceable role. Its fundamental and key tasks — safeguarding peace and security; promoting economic cooperation and social development, including poverty eradication; strengthening the role of international law; and protecting human rights — are even more relevant today than they were 54 years ago. The Slovak Republic is very much aware of this fact.

One of the crucial issues in reforming the Organization and preparing it for the challenges that lie ahead is the reform of the Security Council. The Security Council is the symbol and pillar of the concept of collective security, designed in the aftermath of the most tragic conflict of this century in order to prevent its repetition.

The fundamental political changes that have taken place in the world in the last 50 years represent a challenge to the future role of the Security Council and its legitimacy. We must draw lessons from past setbacks. Caused mostly by the divergent interests of major actors or by a lack of political will, they paralysed the Security Council, which remained inactive instead of taking effective action on behalf of the Member States. Otherwise, we risk the erosion of the authority of the Security Council and consequently of its central role in the maintenance of international peace and security. The United Nations cannot afford to let that happen, because there is no alternative to the concept of collective security as embodied in the United Nations Charter. The modern world needs a supreme security authority with unquestioned credibility.

The key tasks of Security Council reform are to strengthen its representative character, improve the effectiveness and transparency of its decision-making process and working methods and, ultimately, enhance its legitimacy. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to reach the widest possible agreement on enlarging its membership and on the veto right, which plays a pivotal role in the overall reform of the Council. Unless the scope of application of the veto and its relationship to potential new members of the Security Council are clarified, it will be very difficult to proceed to the enlargement of the category of permanent members.

Slovakia recognizes as legitimate the efforts of some countries, which, being capable of assuming a share of the gobal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, desire a position in an enlarged Security Council. At the same time, however, it is necessary to ensure the appropriate representation of the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean region, since those countries represent a significant majority of the United Nations membership.

Regrettably, as the past six years of discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council have shown, a fundamental divergence of views continues to exist with regard to enlarging the category of permanent members, thus making it very unlikely that concrete results will be achieved in the near future.

We believe that in order to move ahead, we should proceed gradually rather than running in place in order to prevent the United Nations from "missing the boat" in our rapidly changing world. If there is no agreement on other categories of membership, Slovakia is ready, at this stage, to support expanding only the non-permanent category. The overall number of seats in the enlarged Security Council would then depend on the scenario eventually agreed on by Member States. Nevertheless, it should not exceed the range of 23 to 25 in order to preserve its capability to act promptly. I would like to point out that Slovakia is flexible in this regard. The expansion of the Security Council should also take into account an appropriate increase in the representation of the Eastern European regional Group, whose membership has more than doubled in recent years.

Peacekeeping operations continue to be one of the key instruments available to the United Nations in the discharge of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Nevertheless, in the light of the tragic experience of recent and still-raging conflicts, it is necessary to reinforce those mechanisms, which would allow the United Nations to more actively concentrate on preventing conflicts and addressing their causes rather than their consequences. An early- warning system should be further enhanced, and preventive diplomacy should play a more active role in potential conflict situations.

Today's conflicts have many dimensions, which must be addressed comprehensively. An integrated, multidimensional approach to peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building must be taken if a conflict is to be resolved in a durable manner. It is important to ensure an

effective coordination among the military, civilian and humanitarian components of multidisciplinary operations, which should be given adequate mandates and resources.

As time is a crucial factor in most cases of deployment of peacekeeping forces, Slovakia supports the efforts to enhance United Nations rapid-deployment capabilities through the United Nations standby arrangements system. Regional initiatives play an important role in this respect, and Slovakia has therefore joined the Central European Nations Cooperation in Peace Support, aimed at closer cooperation among several Central European States in the field of the preparation, training and participation of their armed forces in peacekeeping operations.

Since its admission to the United Nations Slovakia has been contributing to a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, Asia and Europe, including those in Angola, Rwanda, the border region of Uganda and Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Syrian Golan Heights, Jerusalem, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Eastern Slavonia. The Slovak Government has also recently decided to contribute an engineering unit to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Slovakia thus ranks among the leading troop contributors in terms of the number of troops per capita. I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Assembly that Slovakia is determined to continue to support United Nations peacekeeping activities in all the main areas: troops, logistics and training.

The active participation of the Slovak Republic in United Nations peacekeeping activities has proved that it has a responsible approach to the maintenance of international peace and security, and has logically led to the submission of its candidature for the non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2000-2001. Through membership in the Security Council, Slovakia would like to prove that small countries, too, can make an important contribution to the resolution of conflicts and crises in the world.

Kosovo is the most recent example of the tragic reality of the present-day Balkans, driven by violence and ethnic hatred, which is not only a product of the region's complicated historical circumstances, but, above all, the result of human rights violations and of the misuse of ethnic differences to reach short-sighted political goals. Slovakia attaches great importance to the political resolution of the Kosovo conflict, and appreciates the efforts of the United Nations, the Secretary-General, the Contact Group dealing with the former Yugoslavia and regional organizations to this end. We welcomed with great hope the adoption of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), aimed at creating conditions for building a democratic Kosovo based on respect for the human rights of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin and religion, and for all the principles enshrined in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.

Post-conflict peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina has proved that reconstruction of a conflict-torn society on a multi-ethnic basis is in no way an easy task. However, if new tragedies are to be prevented, the international community must give a hand to the people in that part of Europe in their quest for reconciliation and for building mutual trust. An important role in these efforts is to be played by the economic reconstruction and development of the entire Balkan region.

In this connection, Slovakia welcomes and fully supports the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. I believe it will open a new stage in the history of the region. The proof of the importance which the Slovak Republic attaches to securing stability in this part of Europe is the appointment of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Mr. Eduard Kukan, as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Balkans. A conference was held under his auspices in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, on the post-war reconstruction of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The conference clearly showed the direction which the international community and Yugoslav society should take if the country is to become a firm part of the community of nations in the Balkans, built on new foundations.

The Slovak Republic considers a just peace in the Middle East to be an important component of global stability. For this reason, we welcomed the signing, on 4 September 1999, of a new agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the implementation of individual steps of the Wye Memorandum. At the same time, we hope that Israel, Syria and Lebanon will also renew their dialogues. Although certain issues remain to be resolved among the parties, we believe that a final agreement will eventually be reached and a permanent peace will be secured for the Middle East region.

The continent of Africa is suffering from far too many conflicts, often fed by poverty and underdevelopment. Clearly, cooperation between the international community and African States is greatly

needed in order to prevent and to address conflicts and to help Africa to create conditions for sustainable development. Slovakia shares the Secretary-General's view, expressed in his report on Africa last year, that Africans themselves must demonstrate the political will to respond to problems by peaceful means and to adhere to the rules of good governance through ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democratization and promoting transparency in public administration. In the meantime, the assistance of the international community is important not only for the economic development of African States, but also to enable them to build their own capacity for conflict prevention and resolution.

The African regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community, should be given credit for the role they have played in the implementation of peace operations in several African countries, and should be provided with the necessary financial and material assistance. Slovakia is ready to contribute its share — for instance, by offering its Training Centre for Peacekeeping Operations, which has specific facilities for training engineering units.

Another pressing problem is the prevention of the illicit flow of arms and military material into zones of conflict, and the enforcement of an effective implementation of the Security Council arms embargoes. The most disturbing fact is that the Security Council's sanctions are violated mostly by non-African countries which have turned Africa into a store for all kinds of weapons. Slovakia firmly adheres to all Security Council decisions, including sanctions. We believe that Security Council sanctions committees should be actively engaged in ensuring the concerted efforts of all the actors concerned — Governments, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, private companies and leaders of opinion — in order to identify the sources of arms flows into zones of conflict and cut off military forces and rebel groups from their resources, thus eliminating their ability to wage war.

I realize that the United Nations is not only a peacekeeper; it also has a role to play in the everyday lives of many people suffering from hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and backwardness. All of us are obligated to promote sustainable development and to protect the global environment and human rights. The best way to prevent and eliminate conflicts is to create conditions for a worthy life for every individual on this planet as well as friendly relations among nations based on the principles of equal rights, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Being a small country, the Slovak Republic does not always have means to resolve global issues comparable to those that some big countries have. But it compensates for this disadvantage with its determined and active approach to all the major problems that mankind is facing. As experience has shown, small and medium-sized countries can contribute significantly to the resolution of crises and conflicts. This may be due to the fact that these countries are not burdened with power interests and are capable of presenting and advocating solutions acceptable to all. Slovakia has already demonstrated its ability to be an active player in international relations. The United Nations and its Security Council are the forums in which we can put this valuable experience to the best use.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Modibo Sidibe, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali.

Mr. Sidibe (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I wish first to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. This does honour to your country, Namibia, and is a source of joy and satisfaction to all of Africa, and particularly to my country, Mali. You may count on the full support of my delegation, on behalf of which it is my honour to address the General Assembly today. I am convinced that with your talent and your experience as an estimable diplomat you will guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion.

I wish also to take this opportunity to convey to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti, our satisfaction at the commitment and skill with which he guided the work of the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

Let me also reaffirm the gratitude of the Government of Mali to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for the determination and wisdom he has shown in the quest for solutions to the central concerns of the international community.

The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly is taking place at the dawn of the third millennium, at a time when the gap between the developed and the developing worlds is growing ever larger. Imbalances in the world economy, the unequal distribution of wealth, poverty, grave and massive violations of human rights, massacres and conflicts of every kind pose a serious threat to international stability.

Despite significant progress in many areas, the United Nations continues to face daunting challenges. It must formulate a collective approach with shared responsibility and greater, more effective solidarity to bring about the economic cooperation that is indispensable for lasting peace and security for all. In that context, many and varied challenges face Mali, Africa, the world at large, and the United Nations at the end of the twentieth century, such as debt, development financing, security including disarmament and international terrorism, democracy, human rights, international migration and United Nations reform.

Last year we spoke out from this rostrum against a globalization dominated by market forces and a financial approach, and in favour of a globalization based on sustainable human development. That is the real challenge, and our growing conviction is that we can resolve all present imbalances if, through renewed, responsible and candid political dialogue, we tackle them with a global and unified vision, with commitment to genuine partnership, and with a sense of shared, equal responsibility in the building of a better world, a world for mankind. That is the approach we must take to addressing the problems of developing countries: indebtedness, their integration as real actors in the world economy, and development financing.

The problem of developing-country indebtedness must continue to be a focus of the attention of the international community with a view to finding a lasting solution that will be acceptable to all. To be sure, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative and the initiative adopted at the Cologne summit of the Group of Seven in June 1999 were important steps. But, because it absorbs more than a third of the export income of developing countries and because debt-servicing costs imperil the future of generations to come, debt is an insurmountable obstacle to any development effort. The debt burden must not merely be lightened; debts must be cancelled. Without playing down any responsibility here, debt cancellation has become necessary in order to enable the efforts and sacrifices made by developing countries to yield their full benefits for their peoples. Debt cancellation, along with a new, more rational debt policy based on the productive capacities of these countries, would lay the foundations for true, sustainable development financing.

Long seen as an act of generosity by the rich towards the poor, development assistance is now viewed as a tangible expression of a solidarity that is indispensable. It has significantly declined in recent years, and we must do everything possible to reverse that trend in order to better meet the financing needs of developing countries. My country, Mali — which has already enacted significant political, economic and structural reforms — hopes that special attention will be given to the situation of African countries in any consideration of this matter. I appeal to developed countries completely to fulfil their commitment to increase official development assistance, to build up our economic capacities in the areas of processing and marketing our commodities, and to pay proper prices for our products and facilitate market access.

The current state of affairs demands a new partnership based on an acknowledgement that development financing is a shared responsibility, which should be reflected in more equitable burden-sharing among donors. Here, the high-level meeting on development financing is of crucial importance. My delegation believes that that meeting should be seen in the two-fold context of follow-up to the major summits and international conferences of the 1990s and of the General Assembly's Agenda for Development.

More than half a century after the creation of the United Nations, there is no further need to prove its relevance and contribution to the disarmament agenda and to building international peace and security. Here I stress the particular importance that Mali attaches to disarmament in general and to micro-disarmament in particular. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely entered into among the States of the region concerned, and the extension of such zones to all regions of the world, will make a significant contribution to international peace and security. In that connection, I would recall that Mali has ratified the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty — the Pelindaba Treaty — to manifest its support for the initiative to make Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

However, let us make no mistake about it, what today seriously threatens peace, the security of women, men and children in Africa are small arms and anti-personnel mines.

As we take stock of the progress made in combating the proliferation of small arms since the fifty-third session, while we appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts, we totally support the appeal for action adopted by the International Conference on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development, held in Brussels on 12 and 13 October 1998. We should welcome the historic decision of the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on the initiative of Mali, to declare a moratorium on the export, import and production of small arms starting on 1 November 1998 and lasting for three years, a moratorium that is supported by a code of conduct. The meeting of the ECOWAS Ministers for Foreign Affairs that was held in Bamako in March 1999, defined the modalities for the implementation of the programme of coordination and assistance for security and development, and adopted a plan of action in nine priority areas to make the moratorium operational. These efforts deserve support from the international community so that there will be more overall cooperation to stem the proliferation of small arms and mitigate their devastating effects.

Also, it is essential to support and extend this moratorium, to apply more strictly the laws and rules in force on arms transfers, to improve them and strengthen them at all levels and to back them up with codes of conduct. We also need to strengthen the capacity of States and increase coordination to deal with this phenomenon. But we also need to work on a progressive and effective international normative mechanism to control the circulation of small arms. We support very strongly the decision of the Assembly to convene an international conference on this question.

Similarly, we must continue our work to free the world of the scourge of anti-personnel mines, and in particular we need to rid Africa of them, for they continue to sow death and mayhem even after conflicts end. We will achieve this by working in the context of the Maputo Declaration and seeing to it that everyone, without exception, ratifies and implements the Convention on the banning of anti-personnel mines. We ratified the Convention very early on, and our country has destroyed its meagre stock of these weapons, which we never in fact used. Mali is now adopting the national legislation required by the Convention on the banning of anti-personnel mines.

In the last 50 years, peacekeeping operations have become an important tool for resolving conflicts by peaceful means and for promoting international peace and security. However, I would like to say that in and of themselves, they are not a solution to conflicts, but only special measures to prevent conflicts from getting worse pending a peaceful solution.

Our constant quest for peace is reflected in our effective participation in peacekeeping operations and our total support for the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa, to which the international community should give special attention. We ask the international community to mobilize quickly, in good time and to a greater extent to support the immediate implementation of hard-to-reach and always precarious peace agreements, as well as peace-building programmes.

Mali also supports any measures to help create a climate allowing us to confront the causes of conflicts, which now relate primarily to underdevelopment, poor governance, deficiencies in democracy and bad cooperation policies. We pin great hopes on the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to make the year 2000 a year of peace and security in Africa, and we very much hope that the international community will give strong support to our continent in its prevention and peacekeeping efforts.

I cannot fail to mention here the close link between security and development and the consequent need to finance security as an integral part of development action. Nor can I conclude without mentioning the ghastly, appalling question of child soldiers.

President Konaré has said in this regard,

> "we have an absolute responsibility for the sad lot of child soldiers, which is not acceptable and cannot be borne; we must put an end to it by unambiguously condemning all those who use these children and who instil in them a culture of violence, thus sowing the seeds of the perpetuation of violence and conflicts ... We must work for a real culture of peace. The place of our children is in school; it is our responsibility to put an end to this heinous phenomenon by denouncing it and taking vigorous steps against it, including international criminal sanctions. Post-conflict programmes must include among their priorities the reintegration through education of child soldiers; and in a general way it must make education the heart of the strategy for building peace and sustainable development."

The decision to hold a special session of the General Assembly to follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001 coincides with the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We must take that opportunity to hasten our attainment of the objectives that we have set for ourselves with regard to children.

We have a unique responsibility towards them. The least we can do on the eve of the new millennium is to provide all boys and girls better health, schools and protection from wars and famines.

Mali is staunchly committed to democracy and human rights. Observance of human, political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights is an integral part of economic prosperity, social equity and the promotion of peace and security. In this context, a certain number of minimum standards are necessary in any democracy based on law and respect for human rights. I am referring to values that we all deem to be fundamental and the observance of which we are committed to: rule of law, respect for human rights, a system of democratic government and the conditions for necessary changes of government in a republican and democratic system. In a democracy, this is the minimum that we must all, each and every one of us, consolidate, build and develop.

The situation in the Middle East remains a source of concern, despite the revival of the peace process. I wish to reaffirm here the unreserved support of Mali for the just struggle of the Palestinian people as well as for a comprehensive just and lasting solution based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the principle of land for peace.

Turning now to the Lockerbie crisis, Mali, basing itself on the progress made in dealing with this question, appeals for the complete, immediate lifting of the sanctions that have been unjustly imposed on the fraternal people of the Libyan Arab Jamahirya, and I am pleased to renew to them the support and solidarity of the people of Mali. Likewise, we are still concerned at the humanitarian cost to civilians in other countries that have been unjustly targeted by sanctions.

Security and stability are facing new threats, including the problem of drugs — which has become worse with globalization — organized crime, international terrorism, money-laundering and corruption. In the face of these threats and their adverse effects of them, the international community must step up its efforts to put in place the mechanisms necessary to eradicate them and cooperate better in order to combat them. In regard to international terrorism, Mali signed the African convention in Algiers, and we support the appeal of the OAU for the speedy conclusion of an international convention in order better to prevent terrorism and to combat it more effectively.

Today, when mankind is preparing for a new millennium, it is essential to adapt the United Nations to the needs of our time. The challenges that we will be facing demand that we adopt appropriate measures now so that the next century will enjoy more peace and more justice in a new partnership based on solidarity among all nations.

If the United Nations is to remain the gathering place in which all countries can make their voices heard to find solutions to problems that confront them, it must not be marginalized. Therefore, it is necessary today more than ever to review the functioning of the system of the Organization in order to adapt it to present and future circumstances.

My delegation is convinced of the need to democratize further our Organization through a comprehensive restructuring of its main organs, particularly the Security Council, the composition of which reflects the state of the world as it was 50 years ago and which does not in any way reflect the political, economic and social realities of today's or tomorrow's world.

In addition, my delegation reaffirms Africa's demand for an equitable division among the two categories of seats. We call upon Member States to reinforce the prestige, the authority, the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the Council.

This session gives the international community a unique opportunity to demonstrate once again that the United Nations is an active, dynamic institution, capable of confronting the major concerns of the world. In order to do this it must prove that, despite the sometimes discouraging complexity of the issues involved and the often divergent national interests of Member States, the Organization is capable of working with determination, creativity and effectiveness for the common good of all. This is what we aspire to.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Masahiko Koumura.

Mr. Koumura (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Namibia, on his assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I would also like to pay my respects to Mr. Didier Opertti Badán, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, for all his efforts during his tenure as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It is also my great pleasure to welcome the admission of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations.

Permit me on this occasion to extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the people of the Republic of Turkey and the people of Greece, who have suffered greatly as a result of the recent earthquakes in those countries. I also express my deep concern regarding the grave damage caused by the earthquake that occurred in Taiwan early in the morning of 21 September, and extend my heartfelt condolences and sympathy to those who have suffered from the disaster.

This is the last session of the General Assembly before the Millennium Assembly is convened next year. During the one-year period to come, we must identify the issues, such as conflicts and poverty, which the international community will face in the twenty-first century and find an answer to what role the United Nations should play in addressing these issues.

Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has been dealing with issues of world peace and security, as well as economic and social issues, including development. In the area of peace and security, during the cold-war era, the ability of the Security Council to cope with conflicts was severely restricted. Even under such circumstances, however, the United Nations made creative efforts, such as peacekeeping operations, and achieved certain results in the Middle East and elsewhere. Since the end of the cold war, the number of peacekeeping operations that has been dispatched has increased dramatically, and their mandates have become diversified. Their activities bore fruit, for example, in Cambodia and Mozambique.

Regarding the issues of refugees and displaced persons created by conflicts, the humanitarian assistance activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others are highly appreciated. In the economic and social area, the United Nations, along with its specialized agencies, has raised issues, set standards and implemented those standards in every field, including development, the environment, human rights, science and culture. In the area of development, in addition to efforts undertaken through its programmes and funds, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations has achieved certain results in coordinating the assistance activities of the international community. The United Nations has, furthermore, played a decisive role in assessing the public opinion of global society. We should hold in high regard such efforts of the United Nations.

Fully recognizing the significance of the Organization, the people of Japan regarded their country's admission to membership of the United Nations as their country's reinstatement in international society after the Second World War. They have been supporting and contributing to the activities of the United Nations ever since.

There is, however, still much to be done by the United Nations in such areas as the prevention and resolution of conflicts and poverty alleviation. It is also important to have fresh viewpoints, including that of human security, in addressing such new issues as those relating to globalization and other global matters. These are the issues we will be passing along to the twenty-first century.

One of the most important issues that the United Nations must continue to address is conflict. In Africa, conflicts continue in many regions. Although peace has been restored in Kosovo, the conflict there left deep scars on local communities in the region and on the hearts of the people, demonstrating once again the importance of conflict prevention. Furthermore, numerous challenges exist on the path towards future reconstruction. There are persistent tensions in Asia. While various conflicts have been resolved in Latin America, there is still work to be done to achieve stable post-conflict development, including the development of and the clearing of landmines in the border region between Peru and Ecuador, who reached a peace agreement on their border dispute last year.

Regarding the efforts to deal with conflicts, I would like to emphasize the following three points. First, it is important to take a comprehensive approach, which includes conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building, and the elimination of potential causes of conflict, such as poverty. Secondly, it is necessary to deal with conflicts in a manner that is suitable to the situation in each region. These two points

were also made in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871), which was issued last year. Thirdly, as regards peace-building, it is necessary that international assistance, from post-conflict emergency humanitarian assistance to long-term development aid, be implemented seamlessly. In addition to these efforts, it has become important to ensure the security of personnel who are engaged in humanitarian or development assistance activities.

In Africa, the United Nations is cooperating in efforts to bring peace in situations of conflict, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, and in the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Japan will consider extending assistance to the efforts of the United Nations as well as to the reconstruction efforts of the countries concerned. We think that efforts to tackle poverty in Africa also contribute to the prevention of conflicts in the region.

With regard to Kosovo, Japan has provided the United Nations Mission in Kosovo with personnel and is actively extending financial support in such areas as humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. It recently dispatched a study mission to explore possible concrete assistance projects.

Turning our attention to Asia, we hope that security in East Timor will be restored at the earliest possible date, through the activities of the multinational force working in coordination with the Government of Indonesia and with the Indonesian armed forces. This force is now starting to be deployed on the basis of the Security Council resolution adopted on 15 September.

Japan has already announced that it will extend a substantial financial contribution to the multinational force. It is making this contribution with the intention of facilitating the participation of developing countries in the effort. Japan will decide the amount of its contribution after the whole picture of the multinational force becomes clear.

The situation of refugees and displaced persons in and outside East Timor causes serious concern. Japan has announced the contribution of a total of $2 million to the activities of UNHCR and the World Food Programme. In addition, it intends to positively consider further assistance after taking into consideration a report from the Government mission now in the region, along with other factors. Furthermore, Japan, in the medium and long term, also intends to provide appropriate assistance for the reconstruction and development of East Timor.

As regards conflict prevention, I wish to commend the Organization of African Unity for already launching efforts to establish an early warning system, and, as regards Asia, I would like to commend the ministerial meeting of the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations for its decision last July to discuss concretely how preventive diplomacy might be dealt with.

Next, I would like to touch upon three issues that are commonly observed in regions in conflict: small arms, anti-personnel landmines, and refugees and displaced persons.

In its efforts to cope with the small arms issue, Japan strongly hopes that the General Assembly will adopt a resolution at this session promoting the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General drafted by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. Japan looks forward to working with other countries for the implementation of those recommendations. Japan will also actively contribute to the successful convening of the international conference on small arms to be held by the end of 2001.

On the issue of anti-personnel landmines, with the entry into force last March of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, it is now necessary to achieve a universal and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines and to clear the mine areas, while extending assistance to mine victims, among whom are many children. Japan has contributed financial assistance of more than $40 million to international and non-governmental organizations and will continue to strive to achieve the goal of "zero victims" at an early date.

With regard to the issue of refugees and displaced persons, Japan highly commends the activities of UNHCR and others and intends to continue to actively cooperate with them.

Since the end of the cold war, international efforts have achieved certain results with respect to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and their delivery vehicles — namely, missiles — as well as arms reduction. Yet the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

(NPT) regime has been challenged by the nuclear testing or secret development of weapons of mass destruction conducted by some States.

Japan calls upon the nuclear-weapon and the non-nuclear-weapon States alike to take constructive actions to ensure the successful convening of the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT next spring. Japan also calls upon the States that have not yet done so to promptly sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty so that it can enter into force as soon as possible, and appeals to every country to respect the moratorium on nuclear testing. Further, it is also important to reactivate the START process and promptly to commence the negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty.

Japan has consistently called for realistic measures for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Every year since 1994, it has submitted to the General Assembly a resolution on nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. Late last July, the Tokyo Forum on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which was established at Japan's initiative, issued its report, which we believe provides a realistic guideline for progress in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Japan would like to consult actively with other countries with a view to implementing the meaningful recommendations contained in the report.

The importance of addressing the issue of weapons of mass destruction other than nuclear weapons, such as biological and chemical weapons, as well as the issue of delivery vehicles, including missiles, is beyond discussion. In particular, Japan will work towards the early conclusion of negotiations on the protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

With regard to the North Korean missile issue, Japan appreciates and welcomes the important progress achieved in the recent United States-North Korea talks. Japan strongly hopes that North Korea's moratorium on missile launching is further assured.

Poverty continues to be a serious issue in many regions of the world. There is a vicious cycle in which the frequent occurrence of regional conflicts exacerbates the problem of poverty, while poverty in turn causes the occurrence and recurrence of regional conflicts. Indeed, poverty should be recognized as the primary issue of the twenty-first century, and it is incumbent upon various players, such as the United Nations, other international organizations, States and civil society, to cooperate towards its eradication.

At the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which was co-organized by Japan, the United Nations and others last October, the Tokyo Agenda for Action was adopted, which encourages African countries to take initiatives on their own; calls for the strengthening of cooperation between African countries and developed countries as well as international organizations; and calls for the promotion of cooperation between Asia and Africa. Japan will remain actively engaged with the issue of poverty in Africa through follow-up efforts for the implementation of the Agenda for Action, such as the debt- management seminar which Japan co-organized with the United Nations and others last month in Kenya.

Japan has been the world's largest donor of official development assistance since 1991. Despite the severity of its domestic budgetary situation, it will continue to extend effective, efficient and high-quality official development assistance and will tackle poverty problems through the further promotion of cooperation with the relevant organizations of the United Nations.

Debt problems are making it extremely difficult for debtor nations, especially the poorest countries, to achieve development. Japan has provided assistance through debt rescheduling and grant aid for debt relief, and will take comprehensive measures to deal with the debt problem, including the steady implementation of the commitment made at the G-8 summit meeting in Cologne.

Important conferences, such as special sessions of the General Assembly, are being held successively in the areas of economic and social development and human rights. The General Assembly's special session on population and development was held this June, at which meaningful proposals for future action were adopted. The sustainable development of small island developing States, which are susceptible to the effects of climate change and are also geographically vulnerable, is the very important subject of the twenty-second special session to begin on 27 September. The development of landlocked States, which are also geographically disadvantaged, is important as well.

The promotion of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action

adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 will be discussed next year at a follow-up special session. The General Assembly special session entitled "Women 2000" will also be held next year in order to further promote the results of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. Building upon the achievements of these special sessions, Japan intends to contribute actively to international cooperative endeavours in these areas.

This is the final year of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. The international community must take prompt and concerted action in responding to large-scale natural disasters, as clearly underscored by our experience with the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Greece, last year's hurricanes in Latin America and the tsunami in Papua New Guinea. The United Nations is required to play a more active role in this endeavour. Moreover, efforts in the area of natural-disaster reduction need to be strengthened. Recognizing the importance of natural disaster reduction in the context of development policy and environmental issues, Japan will promote efforts in this field.

With regard to the advancement of globalization, while taking advantage of the new opportunities it provides for the revitalization of the world economy, the improvement in living standards, the creation of jobs, and development, we must also address its negative effects, such as the growing instability in international finance and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Japan is steadily carrying out financial assistance measures totaling approximately $80 billion, including the New Miyazawa Initiative — by far the largest package of assistance provided by one country — for the East Asian countries which were hard hit by the economic crisis. We strongly expect the economic recovery of the region to resume and that a sound and sustainable development of the world economy will be achieved.

We are also concerned that globalization may aggravate such problems as environmental destruction, international organized crime, drug, terrorism and the spread of infectious diseases. These global issues, which transcend national borders and pose direct threats to each and every person, need to be dealt with by the international community as a whole. It is necessary that we adopt policies that give consideration to women, children and others, who are most susceptible to the effect of these global issues.

Although globalization also engenders creativity by facilitating interaction among various cultures and different value systems, due consideration also needs to be paid to the cultural diversity of the world. From this standpoint, we consider that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization will play an even more important role in the coming century.

Japan has been stressing the importance of addressing the various issues I have just mentioned by focusing efforts on human security, that is, the protection of the dignity and life of every person against the many threats posed, for example, by poverty; the outflow of refugees; environmental issues; infectious diseases, such as AIDS; human rights violations; international organized crime, including human and drug trafficking; conflicts; anti-personnel landmines and small arms; and terrorism.

Last June Japan hosted the International Symposium on Development, at which the issue of how to encourage the self-reliance of individuals to escape from poverty was discussed. On the initiative of Prime Minister Obuchi, Japan established the Human Security Fund within the United Nations to support the activities of international organizations and to promote human security. Japan recently announced its contribution of $100 million for reconstruction and assistance for the return of refugees in Kosovo, and it will implement that assistance through the Human Security Fund and other sources.

It cannot be said that the efforts of the United Nations to address the issues that will confront the international community in the twenty-first century are sufficient. Nevertheless, it is not right to claim that the United Nations is incapable of addressing those issues adequately, and therefore disregard it. Neither is it right to simply deplore any attempt to disregard the Organization. In as much as many issues today require efforts of the international community as a whole, and as there is no other universal and comprehensive institution that can replace the United Nations, our only recourse is to reform and strengthen the United Nations, so that it will be capable of dealing with the issues adequately. From this viewpoint, I would like in particular to make the following three points.

The first is the need for Security Council reform. During the 50 or so years since the end of the Second World War, the international situation has undergone dramatic changes. Given those changes, the functions of the Security Council, as the body primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, need to be strengthened. Towards that end, it is essential

that the Security Council be re-created to reflect the present international situation, with reform of the composition of both its permanent and non-permanent membership. Japan would like to assume greater responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Second, there is an urgent need for reforms to place the United Nations on a sound financial base. It is necessary for Member States to fulfil their obligation to pay their assessed contributions, and for the United Nations to work to further control its budget. Despite the severe economic and financial situations, Japan has been faithfully fulfilling its obligation to pay its assessed contribution and has been making substantial contributions to the United Nations and related organizations. However, as the Security Council reform has not been realized, and as the necessary budgetary reforms have yet to be carried out, one cannot but question the fairness of a situation in which Japan is expected to pay an assessed contribution that exceeds the sum of the contributions made by four of the permanent members of the Security Council, not including the United States.

Third, it is necessary for the United Nations to strengthen its efforts in the economic and social area, including development. The Organization is expected to obtain the active participation of various actors in addressing problems in the economic and social area, and effectively coordinate their efforts. Japan attaches importance to the role that the United Nations, especially the Economic and Social Council, plays in this area, and is determined, if it is elected this year, to work as a member of the Council towards strengthening the activities of the United Nations in such areas as the coordination between the United Nations agencies, the promotion of dialogue with Bretton Woods institutions and the broad participation by civil society in activities in this area, and coordination of these activities.

We have already devoted a significant amount of time to the discussion of United Nations reform. Today there is a common recognition throughout the international community that the reform of the United Nations is necessary. Indeed, there is not a single country that is opposed to reform per se. Nevertheless, progress towards reform is far from satisfactory. The amount of time that has been expended in discussions so far tells of the difficulty that lies in the way of reforming an organization. We must recognize at the very core of our being that if we fail to strengthen the United Nations through reforms, international trust in the Organization will be undermined. This would not only destroy the United Nations, but would be suicidal to all the Member States and the international community as a whole.

The Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit, scheduled for next year, will provide an occasion on which the United Nations can demonstrate to the world that it is capable of effectively tackling the issues that the international community will face in the twenty-first century. The efforts which Member States make during the one-year period to come could very well determine the viability of the United Nations in the coming century. I would like, therefore, to conclude my remarks by calling upon all Member States to cooperate with each other in pursuing the common interests of the international community as a whole.

The President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Austria, Her Excellency Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria): Mr. President, first let me congratulate you on your election to your high office and assure you of the full cooperation and support of the Austrian delegation. I am convinced that we will have a successful session of the General Assembly, the last in this century, under your able guidance.

Austria fully endorses the statement which was so eloquently delivered by the Foreign Minister of Finland on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add the following observations to that very comprehensive statement.

The United Nations in many ways finds itself at a crossroads. The Organization has to find its role and strengthen its relevance in an increasingly turbulent world. To be sure, we are able to make progress on specific issues. But is that enough in the face of mounting global challenges? Much has been said and written in the last few years about globalization, and I believe we are all aware of the speed and impact of this very dynamic process. What we still need is a coherent political response to this phenomenon. We have to meet the challenges and make the best possible use of the opportunities presented to us.

While our everyday work must be focused on reaching achievable goals within a realistic time, we must never lose sight of our larger duty to provide human security in its fullest sense. This means that we have to provide individuals and communities with security,

dignity and quality of life. We have to protect them against threats to their safety and well-being, such as conflict, discrimination, poverty, organized crime, corruption or repression.

In recent years, a number of initiatives have been successfully launched, in particular on landmines, small arms and child soldiers. Austria is working very actively to promote the human security agenda, and I would like to highlight three priority areas: human rights education, the fight against child pornography and the fight against what the Secretary-General has aptly termed the uncivil society. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the presence of the United Nations in Vienna next month, we will organize a high-level meeting on these and other aspects of human security.

Most threats to human security have a human rights dimension. This is why a human rights security agenda must include an overall strategy aimed at the strengthening of a worldwide human rights culture. Recent events in Kosovo or East Timor have shown that the most basic rights cannot be taken for granted. Again and again we will have to assert the universality and indivisibility of human rights. We therefore stress the importance of human rights education, which is essential for the promotion and the achievement of stable and harmonious relations within countries and among communities. We must redouble our efforts in support of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. Next year's mid-term evaluation of progress made in the Decade provides an ideal opportunity. Institutions and organizations with specialized expertise in our countries should identify specific ideas for further action on human rights education activities at national level, in foreign policy, and in the context of development cooperation.

Every man and every woman must know his or her rights in order to become a full and equal member of society. People must be provided at the national and the international level with effective remedies for human rights violations. We therefore welcome the successful conclusion of negotiations on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Its adoption by the General Assembly and its early entry into force will have great significance for women around the world.

Human security starts in the smallest entities of our society. The mutual learning process within families is one of human beings' most valuable experiences. The family, as the fundamental unit of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all of its members, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community, because it is within the family, first and foremost, where children, the most vulnerable group in society, seek support and protection.

Millions of children are being exploited worldwide. Their basic human rights are being denied in many ways. For some time now, and in particular during the Austrian presidency of the European Union, Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Schüssel has been trying to focus attention on one particular aspect: child pornography on the Internet. Next week, Austria will host an international conference on combating child pornography on the Internet. Organized by Austria, the European Commission and the United States of America, the conference will bring together high-level officials from Ministries of the Interior and Justice, the judiciary and the police, experts from international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the industry, especially Internet service providers. The United Nations system will be represented by experts from the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention. The main objectives of the conference are to reinforce cooperation between law enforcement officials and the judiciary, establish codes of conduct for Internet service providers and the further development of hotlines and networks between them. The results of this initiative will be presented to the United Nations.

The fight against drugs and transnational organized crime has rightly been accorded priority status in the work of the United Nations. I am glad that the reform measures introduced by Secretary-General Kofi Annan have reaffirmed Vienna's role as the United Nations centre for fighting uncivil elements in society.

Austria is particularly worried by reports about the situation in Afghanistan, where the areas under poppy cultivation area apparently doubled in 1998. We are therefore appealing to all partners to enhance their efforts in assisting the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) to combat the cultivation and production of drugs in that region and elsewhere. As a practical contribution to this effort, Austria will sponsor a UNDCP training seminar for Central Asian drug authorities this autumn. Austria strongly believes that drug control is, above all, in the interests of our children and future generations.

In April 2000, the first United Nations conference in the new millennium, the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, will take place in Vienna. The key issues contained in the preliminary draft of the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century (E/1999/30-E/CN.15/1999/12, para. 3), whose final forum will be adopted at the Congress, address the most burning questions in international crime prevention: trafficking in human beings, smuggling migrants and illicit transfers of firearms.

In this context, I can say with satisfaction that the Austrian initiative to elaborate an international legal instrument against the smuggling of migrants, which Austria presented to the General Assembly two years ago, has gathered a great deal of support among United Nations Member States. Currently, intensive negotiations within the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Organized Transnational Crime are being held and will hopefully be concluded next year with the adoption of a universal protocol against the smuggling of migrants.

The last of the series of world Conferences in the 1990s showed that an innovative yet pragmatic approach can work. This was the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, UNISPACE III, which took place in Vienna in July this year. The Conference focused on the question of how to ensure that space technology will benefit humanity in the twenty-first century and that it is used effectively to promote security in all its forms for the benefit of all countries. It has provided developing countries with opportunities to define their needs for space applications for development purposes and to identify ways and possibilities for them to participate in international programmes which develop these applications. UNISPACE III was both a novel and a successful type of Conference in bringing together industry and academia, and young people, as equal partners and incorporating their insights into the final documents.

In the twenty-first century, the United Nations and the international community will be judged by their capacity to prevent armed conflict. At a time when the world's problems appear to be growing and the resources to tackle those problems seem to be shrinking, we must be more strategic than ever in devising new ways to approach these challenges.

Again and again we have had to face the fact that the international community is not in the position to bridge the gap between early warning and early action. In future, efficient mechanisms will have to be implemented by international organizations in order to act at an early stage. In our response to looming refugee crises, much faster action is needed to avoid human catastrophes like the ones we have witnessed in Kosovo and East Timor.

As part of its development cooperation concept, Austria is currently working on a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention which combines all available measures, from facilitation and mediation to a targeted use of the instruments of development cooperation. Austria is actively involved in the Arusha peace process for Burundi and is offering a broad range of seminars and training programmes on preventive diplomacy, in particular with its partners in Africa. Austria's development cooperation aims to promote both sustainable development and sustainable peace.

Austria has always lent its active support to United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security. Since 1960, it has been one of the major contributors to United Nations peacekeeping missions. At the moment, more than 1,500 Austrian troops, civilian police, military observers and civilian experts are serving in United Nations peacekeeping, and other United Nations mandated operations, and in missions in which regional organizations are participating — from Kosovo to East Timor, and from Western Sahara to Tajikistan. We will continue to do our utmost to assist the United Nations in its efforts to enhance stability in many areas of tension around the world.

If we are to cope with all these challenges, we clearly have to reinforce the rule of law in international relations. A large part of the legal basis already exists. What is needed to make it work is our common political will to monitor and to ensure its application. This can only happen in the framework of the United Nations, in particular through the Security Council.

In view of the United Nations primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, it is crucial that the United Nations prove its ability to act quickly and decisively in conflict situations. The decisive action taken during the Gulf war in 1990-1991 raised international hopes and expectations for the future.

But already during the terrible conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it took the Organization much longer to find a successful crisis solution. It only managed to do so by applying a sensible subcontracting policy with regional organizations. The recent tragedies in Kosovo and East Timor have both brought the United Nations and the Security Council to the brink of being perceived in international public opinion as ineffective or unable to act.

The Security Council, which carries the primary responsibility for international peace and security, must maintain its ability to act. It cannot be seen to be driven by the subjective interest of members rather than by an objective assessment of real requirements. It goes without saying that the permanent members bear a particular responsibility in this regard, which includes financial obligations. The privileges of permanent membership come with a heavy obligation: to act whenever necessary. If a peace operation has to be established, it must not matter whether the conflict situation is located in an area of little strategic interest or whether the country in question maintains unwelcome relations with another entity. Its mandate and size must be based on the conditions on the ground, and not depend on anybody's willingness to finance it. Should the Security Council be seen to be unable to fulfil these functions, we will have to heed the call for reforms, including the role of its permanent members.

On East Timor, the Security Council has finally lived up to its special responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter. This proves that the international community must act decisively when confronted with massive violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

Austria welcomes Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) authorizing a multinational force for East Timor under Chapter VII and the commitment of the Indonesian Government to cooperate with this force in the implementation of the mandate. We hope that this initiative will contribute to bringing about national reconciliation, lasting peace and respect for the will of the people of East Timor, expressed so clearly during the consultations on 30 August 1999. Austria underlines the necessity to urgently provide humanitarian assistance, and will also contribute to these efforts.

The vote on the future of East Timor must be respected by all sides. Austria, while underlining its desire to see a strong, democratic and united Indonesia, looks forward to recognizing East Timor once the process towards independence is complete.

Austria sharply condemns the atrocities committed in recent weeks. Those who planned, authorized or executed these acts must be held individually and personally accountable and be brought to justice.

After a long impasse the peace process in the Middle East is back on track. Austria greatly welcomes the memorandum signed by Israel and the Palestinians at Sharm el-Sheikh, which removes the obstacles to the implementation of the Wye Agreement. Furthermore, we have taken note with satisfaction that implementation on the ground has already begun. Here I should especially like to point to the handing over of territory, the release of Palestinian prisoners and the beginning of the final status negotiations. This clear commitment of the parties should augur well for further speedy progress on the road to peace. Now it will also be necessary to bring about new momentum in the Syrian/Lebanese track of the peace process by relaunching the negotiations between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. I think that all parties agree that peace and mutual understanding are the only viable option for a prosperous future for all nations in the Middle East region.

The western Balkans, being geographically so close to Austria, will remain in the foreground of Austrian foreign policy. The most burning problem is currently the situation in Kosovo, which merits the joint attention of the international community. I would like to commend the work which has already been carried out by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and by KFOR, and the progress realized so far, in spite of such difficult circumstances. True, in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), and in our efforts to bring Kosovo back to normalcy, there are delays and setbacks, in particular the insecurity, the tensions in Kosovska Mitrovica, and the exodus of the majority of Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanians. Nevertheless, one must not forget the paramount importance of the Kosovo issue for the stability of the whole Balkan area, which is why we must not become discouraged when we meet problems. Rather, we have to understand them as an incentive to redouble our efforts. Yesterday's demilitarization agreement between KFOR and the UCK is, I would say, a very encouraging step in the right direction.

In addition to setting up a functioning civil administration, including police, creating a democratic

political atmosphere respectful of human rights, repatriating over 1 million refugees, and reconstructing the infrastructure and the economic life of Kosovo, it is UNMIK's crucial task to facilitate a political process leading to a definite status of the province. This is a very complicated endeavour, which requires sound and prudent preparation. We must not try to rush things, since it is clear that stability and reconciliation have to be established and solidified before we can tackle the final status question.

The same holds true for Montenegro. We must, and we will continue to, support the Montenegrin reform process, and we must not allow forces in Belgrade to undercut those pluralistic and economic improvements. For the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a whole, we will continue to work towards democratization, political reform and respect for human and minority rights. Upon such changes — which are not only urgently necessary but which are also yearned for by the Serb and Yugoslav people — Yugoslavia should, and will, take its rightful place in the international community.

In spite of some progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, it still needs and deserves our intense help — both politically and financially. At the same time, it is increasingly necessary for the Bosnians themselves to take on more responsibility for their future and to start a process of decoupling themselves from dependency on international assistance.

Let me emphasize at this juncture Austria's strong belief in the protection and promotion of minorities in general. This attitude is based on historic experience and the conviction that ethnic minorities constitute a true enrichment of our societies.

It is of interest for the international community to recall that there are existing successful settlements of important minority issues in Europe. In particular, I think of the Austrian minority in the South Tyrol, which today enjoys a well-balanced autonomy on the basis of the Paris Treaty of 1946 between Austria and Italy. Time and again it has been noted that this formula could be an example for the settlement of minority disputes in other parts of the world.

Though regional organizations and coalitions of the willing have credibly shown their readiness to take on responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, the United Nations continues to provide the indispensable political, legal and institutional links to ensure the acceptance, legitimacy and accountability of their respective efforts.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plays a central role in promoting peace, security and stability in the regional context, in particular through its broad range of activities in the area of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The broad scope and complex nature of the security challenges in the region requires a pluri-institutional response. But that implies also an effective cooperation among the institutions concerned. The OSCE, as a regional arrangement according to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, is closely cooperating with the United Nations in many fields and regions, such as in Kosovo. In our capacity as the next Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, we will continue the efforts to strengthen the relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations at both the political and field levels.

Let me conclude by confirming Austria's strong commitment to the United Nations. In a little less than one year, our Heads of State or Government will participate in the millennium summit. I hope that this will be the occasion to unlock the potential of the Organization. We must use the wonderful tool of our Organization as it was meant to be used: to ensure our survival on this planet in peace, freedom and dignity. On spaceship Earth the supplies are limited, so we have to make the best possible use of them. Whatever our differences, we all know what needs to be done. Let us find the political will to do it.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, His Excellency Mr. Borys Tarasyuk.

Mr. Tarasyuk (Ukraine): Allow me first of all, Sir, to extend my most sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in discharging this extremely responsible mission. This election is a well-deserved tribute to the personal qualities of the dean of African Foreign Ministers, as well as evidence of the indisputable authority your country enjoys among the members of the international community. The active and responsible position of Namibia as a member of the Security Council serves as another confirmation that the right choice was made by this General Assembly.

I would also like to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for his effective organization of the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. In addition, I have the pleasure to greet three new United Nations Members — Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Ukraine sincerely welcomes them into our family.

The twentieth century will remain, in the history of mankind, as one of unprecedented ideological clashes, with subsequent divisions of the world. The last 10 years, however, have been marked by an *entente universelle* to build this world on the basis of respect for cultural diversity and universally recognized values. This tumultuous period of transition from bloc rivalry to rapprochement and cooperation obviously lacks stability and clear vision. That is why the role of the United Nations, a firm anchor in these troubled waters, takes on increasing and immense importance for all of its Member States.

I would like to place special emphasis on one fundamental factor that determines the significance of the United Nations and makes it universally meaningful. On the eve of the twenty-first century, we have to admit that humankind is still far from achieving the purposes proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations. But at the same time, we must recognize that this document, which has withstood the test of time, has remained the most ambitious yet most realistic code of world order for more than half a century. There exists no alternative to the order defined by the rules and principles of the United Nations, as no alternative exists to the Organization itself, which is destined to be the centre for the coordinated actions of nations in achieving and maintaining such an order.

This vision of the Organization's significance to international life is what has prompted Ukraine to take an active position in carrying out concerted efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations. Two years ago, we all welcomed the programme of institutional reforms put forward by the Secretary-General, which were designed to adapt and update the Organization and to ensure its ability to promptly respond to the challenges of our time. That powerful start, however, dwindled to a slow pace, while our initial optimism and our readiness to go ahead with the programme of reforms of the United Nations remained largely unrealized.

This sort of criticism is all the more pertinent when it comes to the reform of the principal United Nations organ entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. For years, all of us seemed to be in agreement on the need to modernize the Security Council and replenish it with new energy and fresh ideas. I am confident that a new impetus should be given to the work of the Working Group on Security Council reform to get the matter off the ground in the course of the current session.

What could our response be to the challenges that have haunted humankind for the last 55 years? First, the most important conclusion that we can draw from all of the United Nations deficiencies is this: for the Organization to manage to unite nations around basic universal values, it must have adequate tools to protect these values. Universal values must enjoy full support by means of legal, political, economic and military enforcement.

Secondly, the age of confrontation is giving way to an age of cooperation. We should create a world order in which it would be in no one's self-interest to wage wars, oppress national minorities or exert economic pressure on other nations. A broad and ramified system of regional and subregional cooperation would serve this purpose by upholding a universal code of conduct.

In this context, I wish to refer to the recent summit held in the Ukrainian city of Yalta, called "Baltic-Black Sea Cooperation: to the Integrated Europe of the 21st Century Without Dividing Lines". It would be no exaggeration to say that there is here an unavoidable parallel with Yalta 1945. That post-war summit was an example of how three people decided the fate of the world and divided Europe. Yalta 1999, on the contrary, was evidence of how 22 neighbouring countries found sufficient motivation to resolve their problems together and be unanimous in determining their future in a United Europe.

We are particularly encouraged by the increased attention paid by the Security Council and the United Nations in general to humanitarian issues. A major lesson learned from the eruption of numerous local and regional conflicts is that there is an obvious and urgent need to respond to the challenges posed by humanitarian crises and flagrant mass violations of human rights.

The primary role of the Security Council in maintaining and restoring international peace must be reiterated. This role is expressed in the clear and proud language of the Charter. The past and continuing experience of the Council underscores the importance of

the adoption of a holistic approach that brings into prominence both security and humanitarian issues. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan imaginatively put it yesterday, a global era requires global engagement, and the collective interest is the national interest.

How can this ambitious goal be achieved? An important step forward towards the goal of protecting human life and dignity is, of course, the ongoing process of establishing the International Criminal Court. Today, a year after the remarkable conclusion of the Rome Diplomatic Conference, we are pleased to observe that the significance of the adoption of the Court's Statute is widely and rightly recognized as it relates not only to the codification and progressive development of international law but also to the system of international security in the next century.

It is this perception of the nature and purposes of the future judicial institution that determines the position of the Government of Ukraine with regard to the signing of the Rome Statute. I would like to take this opportunity to inform representatives that Ukraine intends to sign the Statute in the course of the current session of the General Assembly.

Guided by its belief that the United Nations and regional organizations should play a key role in conflict prevention, Ukraine was one of the first to come forward with peace proposals during the initial stage of the Kosovo crisis. The peace plan of President Kuchma of Ukraine proved to be realistic, since most of its provisions were consonant with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

For years, Ukraine has been active in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Last July, the President and the Parliament of Ukraine decided to send an 800-strong contingent from Ukraine to participate in KFOR. The Ukrainian military have gained a very positive profile, merited by their earlier service in the United Nations Protection Force, the Implementation Force and the Stabilization Force in Bosnia. Their expertise and contributions outweighed by far the financial costs entailed. We fully recognize our share of responsibility in the common cause of restoring and strengthening peace in the Balkans.

At the same time, recent events in Kosovo and East Timor provide evidence that we should continue to increase the level of security for peacekeepers. As a co-author of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, Ukraine appeals for the elaboration of further practical measures to implement its provisions.

The lesson of Kosovo proves that as long as human rights or the rights of national minorities and international law are ignored, the world will continue to be threatened by humanitarian disasters. It is therefore necessary to pay special attention to regions with so-called frozen conflicts: areas with the potential for new outbursts of violence, refugee flows and economic recession. As a guarantor of peaceful settlement in Transdniestria, Moldova, and an active supporter of the peace process in Abkhazia, Georgia, and in Nagorny Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Ukraine is doing its utmost to translate the relevant agreements into real peace settlements.

Joint efforts are also necessary in post-conflict rehabilitation. Ukraine therefore welcomes both the idea and the adoption of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and is actively proposing specific projects in cooperation with its neighbours. The purpose of the Pact is not only to help reconstruct the Balkans but, most importantly, to give those countries a clear perspective on European integration.

Integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures remains the key priority of Ukraine's foreign policy. Membership in the family of European nations and sharing common values means economic growth, stable democratic development and the consolidation of the European identity of Ukrainians. At the regional level, Ukraine is an active participant in the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Central European Initiative and the GUUAM forum, to which Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova belong.

I have already mentioned the Yalta Conference and the summit of the leaders of Baltic and Black Sea States. In addition, last May Ukraine hosted a summit meeting of eight Central European States. We are developing confidence-building measures on a bilateral basis with our neighbours and in a multilateral framework to reduce naval military activity in the Black Sea region. Pursuing the line that intensive cooperation is the best remedy for conflicts, Ukraine is engaged in various trilateral cooperative agreements promoting free economic areas and transborder projects.

As one of the founders of the United Nations, Ukraine continues to make its contribution to United Nations efforts in strengthening international peace and

security, the non-proliferation regime, disarmament and arms control, crisis management, the promotion of economic and social development, human rights and freedoms and compliance with the fundamental principles of international law. By fostering internal harmony in society, creating an environment of stability and shaping a vast network of regional cooperation, Ukraine is striving to make the fullest possible use of its rich experience and constructive potential for the benefit of the whole international community.

Over three years ago, Ukraine voluntarily renounced its nuclear stockpile — the third largest in the world — and it is strictly abiding by its commitments as a non-nuclear State. We should multiply our efforts to enhance the efficiency and universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this context, it is of the utmost importance to break the stalemate in the preparatory process for the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Ukraine has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is now successfully completing legislative procedures to fulfil its international obligations under this Treaty. Last February, our country became a party to the Ottawa Convention banning the use of anti-personnel landmines, while in March Ukraine's Government decided to prolong the moratorium on exports of all types of anti-personnel landmines.

My country is ready to participate in the development of collective measures to fight the proliferation of and illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We support the initiative of Canada and the Netherlands to establish an international regime for the control of light weapons and to start negotiations on working out a convention on the prevention and combating of the illegal transportation of firearms and light weapons.

Aware of the danger of the uncontrolled circulation and accumulation of conventional weapons, Ukraine strictly abides by Security Council and General Assembly resolutions imposing restrictions on international arms trafficking. All of these factors explain Ukraine's ambition to be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Our ambition is particularly strong since it is our first bid for this seat as an independent State.

If elected, Ukraine would base its position in the Security Council on the following fundamental principles: paying adequate attention to conflicts and tense situations in different parts of the world, judging them by the real requirements of each particular case; using all political and diplomatic means available to the Security Council to prevent or manage conflicts; increasing the importance of the humanitarian dimension among the Council's priorities; and enhancing the ability of non-members of the Security Council to influence the decision-making process in that body. In addition, there is a need to analyse the present mechanism of sanctions to ensure that their imposition is balanced and well-grounded, in particular taking into account eventual negative consequences for third countries.

Ukraine remains deeply concerned at the problems of Africa. Our concerns are nurtured by the strong traditional ties of friendship that unite Ukraine with African nations. One could hardly disagree that Africa is a continent with unlimited potential for economic and social development. At the same time, it is absolutely imperative that the international community take very concrete and effective steps to assist African States in developing that potential and in responding to the challenges facing their continent.

Nowadays it is difficult to blame the United Nations for the lack of attention to Africa. For example, at this very moment, the members of the Security Council are responding to a briefing on recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given by the President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Mr. Frederick Chiluba. In just a few days, the Security Council will hold another meeting to reaffirm its commitment to the cause of peace and prosperity in Africa. I intend to present my delegation's contribution to the deliberations of the Council, and will make more specific remarks on this matter in the course of that meeting. At the same time, Ukraine hopes that commitment to Africa on the part of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole will be reflected in concrete deeds that benefit Africa.

The situation in the Middle East requires closer attention by the Security Council. We believe that the Security Council should send strong encouragement to all the parties to the Middle East peace process. It is time to come back to the negotiating table to find a final compromise solution to the pending problems on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. In that context, Ukraine welcomes the recent signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on 4 September, brought about thanks to the constructive approach of the new Israeli Government and to the position taken by the Palestinian leadership.

East Timor continues to be a hot spot. Ukraine welcomed the success of the 30 August 1999 popular consultation of the East Timorese people, which was possible thanks to the constructive position taken by the Government of Indonesia and the active intermediary mission of the Secretary-General. Ukraine supported the Security Council's adoption of its resolution 1264 (1999), which authorized the establishment of a multinational force pursuant to the request of the Government of Indonesia.

The past year has been marked by an unprecedented outbreak of terrorist acts in various parts of the world. We are convinced that intensified international efforts to combat terrorism need a more concentrated focus on the underlying causes of this extremely acute international phenomenon, on its deep social roots and on relevant historical conditions, as well as on situations that may give rise to international terrorism and endanger international peace and security. At the same time, whatever actions are undertaken at the international, regional or national levels, they must all be in full conformity with the basic principles of international law and must not run counter to the fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter.

Underdevelopment and impoverishment, the threat of marginalization, the burden of external debt, a lack of resources, and ecological disasters pose a real threat to international peace and sustainable development. Circumstances such as the global financial crisis and the war in Kosovo have considerably impeded economic progress in many parts of the world. Ukraine has managed to curb its losses and maintain macroeconomic stabilization since August 1998. On the other hand, the curtailment of navigation on the Danube has paralysed economic the activities of Ukrainian shipping companies, ports and enterprises. The total accumulated losses of Ukraine amount today to more than $300 million. Together with Romania, Bulgaria and other interested parties, we are ready to clear the waterway for the soonest possible resumption of navigation as the best way to cope with the humanitarian hardships of Balkan peoples.

Speaking about global issues requiring joint efforts of the international community, I must again emphasize the problem of Chernobyl, which is so painful for Ukraine and for its neighbours, Belarus and Russia. Our country is meeting its commitments to decommission the Chernobyl nuclear power plant as envisaged in the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Ukraine and Governments of the Group of Seven and the European Union. It therefore has every ground to expect the fulfilment by its partners of their obligations. We welcomed the statement issued by the Group of Seven in Cologne last June regarding the convening of a second pledging conference for the mobilization of financial resources to implement the working plan on the transformation of the Shelter facility into an ecologically safe system. We consider this to be a confirmation by our partners of their commitment to the memorandum of understanding.

From this rostrum I call upon all potential donors to take part in that conference and to make pledges to the Chernobyl Shelter fund, to enable it to reach the required amount of just $770 million. According to the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme, expenditures for cigarettes in Europe amounted to $50 billion in 1998 alone. Compared to this, the amount needed for Chernobyl looks like quite a small price to save the environment of that vast region.

The present century gave the world so notable a document as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Still, we have witnessed the most brutal and massive violations of those rights. Famine, genocide, ethnic cleansing, torture and various forms of discrimination continue to haunt mankind. That is why the strengthening of international mechanisms to monitor human rights violations is especially urgent today. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights should play a leading role. Cases of the most massive violations of human rights should be considered by the Security Council with a view to taking preventive or coercive measures.

Hence, it is imperative to strengthen the role of international law in international relations in order to ensure strict observance of the main norms and principles, first and foremost respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Ukraine continues to support the International Court of Justice as the Organization's principal legal institution.

The establishment of a world system that would guarantee peace and security, prosperity and sustainable economic development, and the preservation of the environment for future generations requires decisive joint action by the international community. That process should be led by a reformed and renewed United Nations, an organization with great experience and opportunities to solve problems of global dimensions. For that purpose, the General Assembly has approved a comprehensive programme for United Nations reform —

by the way, under the presidency of my predecessor Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, who is present in this Hall today. But while debating it, we did not notice that two years had passed and that we were approaching the brink of the millennium. The prominent Ukrainian philosopher of the eighteenth century, Grigory Skovoroda, said that a waste of time is the heaviest of all losses. Let us bring to life what we have conceived for the benefit of the United Nations.

The President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benaissa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco.

Mr. Benaissa (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the sisterly country of Namibia on your election to chair the proceedings of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. This choice is truly an honour for our continent and a tribute to your promising country. We are convinced that under your leadership our work this year will be successful, and this session will constructively result in the realization of our expectations.

I would also like to express appreciation and gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, Foreign Minister of the friendly country of Uruguay, for his excellent conduct of the work of the previous session.

We also welcome the new Member States that have joined our Organization: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his admirable management of the Organization and for his commendable efforts to infuse it with a new dynamism so that its organs can fulfil our aspirations. He deserves our admiration and appreciation.

Many important events have marked this century to which we are about to bid farewell. They have led to a new political and economic balance of power and a modification of the international system. With the disintegration of borders, the evolution of means of communication and the spread of globalization in the financial and technological fields, the universality of the issues affecting mankind has become the most distinctive characteristic of international relations, and the problems of the age have become too difficult for individual countries to resolve.

The tragedies witnessed over the last few years, including ethnic cleansing and blatant defiance of the universal human conscience, call more than ever before for pooling the efforts of the international community and consolidating the role and the efficiency of the United Nations, which is indeed the best-suited forum for settling international disputes. This would make it possible for the Organization to fully shoulder its responsibilities and keep abreast of current challenges, while displaying a political will that would enhance its credibility and strengthen its ability to achieve its goals.

As regards the Security Council, current events on the international scene require that we reconsider its working methods and its composition in order to enhance its credibility, promote its ability to preserve international peace and security and ensure balanced representation in its membership on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

Economic and social conditions in the world still rank high among the concerns of mankind. Indeed, as illustrated by widely divergent indicators between the North and the South, the world is suffering from a widening gap in economic and social conditions and strong disparities in human development. Those ever-increasing disparities constitute a basic factor in the instability that characterizes our world today. This imbalance has led to a proliferation of poverty in various parts of the world, as well as to the spread of illiteracy, unemployment and several other social ills that now threaten world peace and security.

We recall with appreciation the distinguished role played by the United Nations, as it has developed over the last few years a special interest in various economic and social development issues.

Morocco is fully aware of the importance of social development as a fundamental means of achieving comprehensive development. This awareness was the cornerstone of several pioneering initiatives taken by Morocco to overcome social problems, especially the plague of poverty. To that end, an institution known as the Mohammed V Solidarity Foundation was set up, and is now under the supervision of His Majesty King Mohammed, to fight poverty by mobilizing the active components of civil society.

In keeping with its firm belief that individual and collective prosperity cannot take place outside the purview of democracy and respect for human rights,

Morocco has taken keen interest in the consolidation of human rights and democratic practices. Hence, Morocco has undertaken some pioneering initiatives in the area of promoting human rights, disseminating a human rights culture, and protecting them against any violation or transgression. It has enhanced the role of the various components of civil society, including institutions that promote the role of women, in various political, economic, social and cultural fields. Opting for the multiparty system and democratic alternation of government as a political system, Morocco has made human rights and fundamental freedoms an individual and a collective principle that is considered a strong pillar of the Moroccan political system. This, in turn, has made it possible for Morocco to hold a distinguished position among the countries that have adopted democracy as a system and as a way of life.

Convinced of the absolute necessity of coexistence with its neighbours, in keeping with the strong historical ties between Morocco and Spain, and given the desire of both countries to further enhance their cooperation and good neighbourliness, Morocco has been calling for the implementation of the initiative of the late King Hassan II aimed at setting up a joint Moroccan-Spanish working group to reach a final settlement of the current status of the two cities, Ceuta and Melilla, and the neighbouring islands, in a way that ensures Morocco's sovereignty over those regions while guaranteeing Spain's economic interests. We do hope that the deep historical ties between the two countries, the solid and privileged relations that exist between them, and the ambitions of both peoples to achieve further rapprochement and cooperation, will be a strong incentive towards reaching a final solution to this problem, satisfactory to both parties.

Ever since their independence, Arab Maghreb countries have believed in the inevitable necessity to achieve regional integration in order to counter the challenges of development and to ensure the progress and prosperity of their peoples. In keeping with those objectives, the Arab Maghreb Union was set up as a reflection of the region's age-old shared history and an embodiment of its peoples' unity of faith, language, history and common destiny. Given the blocs and groupings that characterize the world today and the challenges imposed by the current economic situation, we believe that it is necessary to pursue efforts to give fresh impetus to the Arab Maghreb Union as well as a new dynamism to its various organs, while strengthening cooperation among its members so that it may discharge its mission by taking up development challenges and building an integrated Maghreb economy.

Morocco welcomes with deep satisfaction the positive developments witnessed on the Lockerbie issue, which have led to the suspension of the sanctions imposed on the sisterly Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Because of its solidarity with that country, a founding member of the Arab Maghreb Union and one of the pioneering leaders among Arab and African countries, Morocco notes with deep regret the long lasting hardships and the grave tragedy endured by the Libyan people due to the embargo imposed on them. We hope that sanctions applied to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya will be completely and definitively lifted as soon as possible, on the basis of the principles of justice and equity, and that the sisterly Libyan Arab Jamahiriya will resume its constructive role, within the international community, for the establishment of security, stability and peace.

The international community has followed with satisfaction the beginning of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis. This has been achieved through various agreements reached by the parties concerned, the latest being the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum. Those accords rekindled the hopes of the peoples of the region in building a new future based on security, stability and coexistence. The agreements that have been signed — which are founded on the principle of land for peace — set the stage for a new era based on international law, as attested to by the commitments made by the parties concerned. The accords uphold the right of all peoples of the region to live in security and stability, and the right of the Palestinian people in particular to exercise self-determination and to establish its independent State.

The brotherly Iraqi people have been suffering for years from the impact of an economic embargo that has had pernicious effects on them, especially children, women and the elderly. As it voices full solidarity with the fraternal Iraqi people, Morocco calls for the pooling of international efforts in order to lift the embargo and to find a peaceful settlement to this problem within the framework of international law and in compliance with Security Council resolutions. In this respect, we stress the need to preserve the sovereignty of Iraq, its security and its territorial integrity.

Solving the many problems affecting Africa requires that the international community seriously tackle the economic and social conditions and the various conflicts that beset most African countries, conditions that have had a negative effect on the hopes of African peoples, as well as on their legitimate right to achieve comprehensive development and to live under stable and safe conditions.

Being deeply committed to our ties of brotherhood and solidarity with all African countries, Morocco has consistently placed African issues at the forefront of its concerns. As a token of its unwavering solidarity with African countries, Morocco devotes 95 per cent of its annual international assistance appropriations to African countries.

Morocco has followed with keen interest the international endeavours aimed at restoring peace in Kosovo and at putting an end to the bloody conflict and ethnic-cleansing campaigns that have claimed the lives of thousands of innocents Kosovars, in blatant violation of international law and of the most fundamental principles of human rights. Given its keen desire to strengthen peace in the region, Morocco has expressed its readiness to participate in KFOR and has made all possible humanitarian efforts to provide material assistance to Kosovar refugees. To this end, it also set up, at the initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem, a fund to collect donations for Kosovar children.

Because of its geographical location, its historical ties and its economic and cultural relations with Mediterranean countries, Morocco believes that the consolidation of security and stability and the promotion of cooperation in the region are an absolute necessity. Thus Morocco took part in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, from the Barcelona conference to the Stuttgart conference, which provided an opportunity to assess the Barcelona process three years after its inception. During the Stuttgart conference Morocco voiced its conviction that for security and stability to prevail in the Mediterranean basin there has to be an effective partnership between the countries of the region that takes into consideration the political, economic, social and cultural dimensions.

The Kingdom of Morocco has always taken a great interest in the question of disarmament, because it is linked both to international peace and security and to economic and social development. In this respect, we reiterate the need to ensure that all the countries of the Middle East region join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submit their facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This action, along with making the Middle East region a nuclear-weapons-free zone, would be a decisive contribution to restoring confidence and peace in that region.

As regards the question of the referendum in our southern desert provinces, Morocco reiterates its full support for the efforts of the United Nations, especially those of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, aimed at completing the process as soon as possible and under conditions most conducive to transparency, justice and success. As a contribution towards that objective, Morocco has endeavoured, from the start of the process, to inform the United Nations of any deviations that might affect the legitimate rights of the potential participants in the referendum. Thus, following the publication of the first part of the preliminary lists of the Sahraouis that have been identified, Morocco expressed concern over practices that have affected the identification process and have led to the elimination of thousands of names of people of Sahraoui origin, despite the fact that they had met the agreed criteria and conditions.

It is our dearest hope that the United Nations will come up with equitable solutions that take into consideration our concerns and those of thousands of Sahraoui candidates who, had they not been compelled to leave the region because of the fight they were waging against colonialism, would have been covered by the census and therefore been accepted directly by the Identification Commission.

The phenomenon of economic globalization has been swiftly developing and expanding. It has led to a liberalization of markets, swifter exchange relations, enhanced global productivity and greater financial flows. The economic changes affecting the international arena call for a comprehensive review of the rules of international economic interactions in order to adapt them to those changes and to the development needs of all of humanity. This aspect was at the forefront of the concerns of His Majesty King Mohammed VI in the address he delivered, when he was Crown Prince, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the multilateral trading system, celebrated in Geneva in 1998. His Majesty pointed out that

> "the comprehensive project advocated by the founders of our system remains fragile because of the fate of hundreds of millions of people who will not accept indefinite marginalization while tremendous progress and prosperity are being enjoyed by the advanced countries of the world."

In future negotiations, and within the framework of the World Trade Organization, Morocco is of the view that the adoption of a global and balanced approach reflecting the legitimate interests of all countries, while taking into account the developmental dimension of

advanced countries, should be the best means to achieve a just and balanced international trade system. Morocco believes that effective solutions to the debt problem should not be restricted to partial alleviation of the debt burden of some countries only, but should, rather, take the form of a comprehensive policy to stimulate the economic activity of debt-ridden developing countries through promoting their exports and encouraging direct foreign investments in them.

Following the ninth ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China — which I had the honour of chairing and which was held in Marrakesh, Morocco, from 13 to 16 September 1999, in preparation for the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — the Group of 77 and China adopted the Marrakesh Declaration, which pointed out that

> "the disparities in the scope and impact of globalization have led to economic disharmony, both at the international and national levels. This translates into new challenges to our development ambitions. Many developing countries are facing difficulties in their attempts to effectively integrate with the world economy and are suffering the consequences of globalization."

In conclusion, we believe that, as we stand on the threshold of the new millennium, the international community should exert greater efforts to create a political, economic and social environment conducive to further cooperation and rapprochement among peoples, so that all of mankind can enjoy the fruits of peace and live in prosperity and tranquility.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): In my statement, I should like to dwell on those questions, which, in our opinion, demand special attention. First among these is the issue of security and the maintenance of regional and global stability.

Today, we are forced to recognize that terrorism is one of the principal challenges and threats to international security and stability in the twentieth century. Should the United Nations react to this most daunting challenge? Yes. The coordination of the efforts of the international community in the search for legal mechanisms to fight terrorism at the global level has become urgent. The struggle against terrorism transcends the problems of one country or even groups of countries. I take this opportunity to emphasize in particular the serious threat of terrorism facing the States of Central Asia. In this respect, I wish to say the following.

First, terrorists, using Islam — one of the world's most peaceful religions, founded on the greatest cultures of civilization — as a cover, are seeking to attain the broadest of political goals: the creation of a new regional and ultimately global order. The terrorists' methods of assassinating peaceful civilians and creating diversions radically contradict the principles and values of Islam.

Secondly, terrorism is undergoing an intensive process of internationalization. Extremists working in Central Asia are consolidating their ranks with recruits from throughout the world. Terrorism has neither nationality, borders nor any particular belief. Attempts to give terrorism, and international terrorism in particular, a national or ethnic character do not reflect reality and have their own dangerous consequences.

Thirdly, the fight against terrorism requires coordinated international efforts and wide recognition of the legitimate rights of States to protect their citizens from terrorist assaults. Terrorists casually and most insolently attack peaceful populations and deprive human beings of their fundamental right to life.

Fourthly, the global danger of terrorism is obvious today. There is an understanding at the international level of the need for coordinated action. At the same time, we do not fully understand the rather subdued reaction of the international community and the major States to the most dangerous spread of terrorism in Central Asia, posing the threat of regional and global destabilization.

Finally, the contemporary wellsprings of terrorism, where it is born and nurtured, are the theatres of military conflict. In our region, that means Afghanistan.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

A working meeting of the "six plus two" group in the special format, with the participation of representatives of the two main parties to the Afghan conflict, was held in Tashkent two month ago. The discussion resulted in the signing of the Tashkent Declaration, defining the fundamental principles for the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan supports increased international efforts to further assist the stabilization of the situation in Tajikistan and the rapid elimination of new hotbeds of tension in southern Kyrgyzstan, which has become a new target for invasion by international terrorists and extremist forces. In this regard, I would propose the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly to consider the problem of terrorism in the framework of the Security Council, as well as the establishment of an informal group to coordinate efforts aimed at fighting terrorism and extremist crimes. We also support the proposal to convene an international conference on the fight against terrorism. We believe that the international community, in preparing for the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000, should show its determination by defining extremist crimes and drafting its explicit understanding of the threat of terrorism.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is recognized around the world as an authoritative supporter of the non-proliferation of the nuclear weapons. Uzbekistan is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. The Republic was among first countries to sign an Additional Protocol to its agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the application of safeguards in connection with the NPT. These actions revealed not only a deep understanding of the importance of these international documents, but also our desire to make a real contribution to solving the problem of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, improving the planet's ecology and strengthening global security and regional stability.

The issue of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones is firmly established on the disarmament agenda. It is already widely recognized that the creation of such zones is a unique instrument in the process of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, which undoubtedly strengthens international and regional peace and security. Let me express the conviction that this topic will be considered as one of the major issues in the work of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The value of this step is of special importance in the light of nuclear testing in South Asia and the clear tendency towards a global arms race.

Substantial progress has been achieved towards the realization of the Central Asian initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The Central Asian countries, through their common efforts and with the support of the United Nations, have come considerably closer to concluding a treaty on the establishment of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. I hope that, at the meeting to prepare the draft treaty to be held in Japan in few days, the experts of the Central Asian countries will be able to finalize the draft.

The Republic of Uzbekistan supports the measures proposed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to reform the United Nations. The implementation of the reform programme will go a long way towards adapting the United Nations to the demands of the modern world. The Secretary-General's proposal to convene the Millennium Assembly and the Millennium Summit in the year 2000 must be implemented. The year 2000 is a unique symbolic moment to affirm the position of the United Nations and to strengthen its role as a leading force in the twenty-first century.

The Republic of Uzbekistan continues to consider Security Council reform to be a necessary and urgent process. Any delay in this process will prevent the United Nations from adapting efficiently to the dynamics of the coming millennium. We are convinced that Germany and Japan can rightly claim permanent membership of the Security Council. We are also in favour of an increase in the number of new non-permanent members of the Security Council.

The deteriorating problem of the Aral Sea requires me once again to call on the Assembly for support. With the help of international organizations, the opinion that the Aral Sea crisis can be resolved only through humanitarian intervention has gradually taken root in the perception of the international community. But this is not the case.

Measures of this kind have not given positive results on any continent where mankind has been faced with ecological catastrophes. In this connection, it is necessary to develop and implement, with the assistance of the United Nations specialized agencies and donors, a specific, long-term strategy and programme of revitalization for the Aral area, that would affirm the principles of sustainable development, prevent a deterioration of quality of life for people living in the region and ensure a dignified standard of living for future generations.

We are hoping for the effective support of such international financial and economic institutions as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and others, as well as donor countries, in the normalization of the ecological situation and in meeting the pressing needs of the population living

in the affected area. The problem of Aral Sea can be solved only with the help of an adjusted financing mechanism and the conscientious work of experts.

The Republic of Uzbekistan comprehensively supports efforts of the United Nations and the international community aimed at counteracting the illegal cultivation, transportation and consumption of narcotic substances. The problem of drugs should be considered a danger in that it gives rise to terrorism, international crime and money-laundering.

The illegal sale of drugs is the most profitable shady activity in the modern world. The transnational structures controlling global trade in drugs appear in most cases to be more mobile than the structures opposing them. Today, as has been pointed out by previous speakers, more than 90 per cent of the drugs in some European countries are of Afghan origin.

According to a 1998 annual report on international drug control, starting in 1995 Uzbek customs employees halted the attempted illegal export from Europe to Afghanistan of 72 tons of raw chemical material used for heroin manufacturing. This reaffirms the conclusion about the internationalization of the narcotic business and the emergence of international terrorism, which is no less dangerous.

During the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the fight against the illegal manufacturing, sale, purchase, transport, trafficking and spread of narcotic substances, we advanced many concrete proposals, including the establishment of a regional coordination centre to fight drug-trafficking and the drug business. Concrete forms of cooperation between Central Asian countries and the European Union were defined.

We call for more work by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in the region of Central Asia. The conclusions of experts show that the Central Asian region is considered by the criminal world an important transit area for the transport of drugs to Europe and North America.

Specific UNDCP projects aimed at the development of technical possibilities to control the transit of goods by providing border services with up-to-date methods of drug detection could contribute to this fight, which can hardly be regarded as the problem of one region alone. In this regard, we welcome the establishment, on the initiative of the Secretary-General, of the United Nations Office on Drug Control and Crime Prevention's regional office operating in Uzbekistan.

The process of democratization is long and complicated, especially if it runs parallel to large, extensive economic reforms. However, the real threat to democracy, security and stability in the region stems from the sphere of transnational crime. In this respect, we state our firm support for the work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

For this reason, the Republic of Uzbekistan has expressed its intention to present its candidature for membership of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for the period of 2001-2004. We hope that the tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, to be held from 10 to 17 April 2000, in Vienna, will be devoted to the search for answers to the challenges of the twenty-first century, as indicated in a number of its main topics.

We would like to focus on the work of UNDP in Uzbekistan. As the largest United Nations programme rendering assistance to developing countries in their process of development, UNDP, together with the Government of Uzbekistan, is carrying out a number of useful projects. We hope that such cooperation will be continued in the future as well.

Nevertheless, I would like to say a few words about one problem that has emerged in our cooperation with UNDP and that, in our view, must be explained. The proposed regional UNDP Programme for development of the Fergana Valley has not received the support of our Government. In our opinion, the substance of the project has not been sufficiently considered and could entail negative consequences.

Despite the exhaustive and comprehensive substantiation by our Government of the unacceptability of this project, which interferes with the security of the region, attempts to involve our country in the participation of the programme by distributing erroneous information throughout the international community have been undertaken during the last three years by UNDP and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

We sincerely hope that the new UNDP Administrator, Mr. Brown, will take note of Uzbekistan's assessments. At the same time, we note with satisfaction

the new style of work at the UNDP mission in Uzbekistan, which was recently headed by Mr. Kral.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the book written by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Islam A. Karimov, *Uzbekistan at the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century: Threats to Security, Conditions and Guarantees of Progress*, which says,

> "As we enter the new millennium, we extend to everyone the hand of friendship and mutual understanding, symbolizing this with the words security, stability and sustainability of growth and development. For we believe that the realities these words signify constitute the most solid foundation for global geopolitical balance, and for the peace, prosperity and well-being of every individual country, which will enable every human being to face the future with confidence".

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Her Excellency Ms. Anna Lindh.

Ms. Lindh (Sweden): The past year has been a difficult one for the United Nations. Its principles have been challenged. Its relevance has been questioned. Still, at the end of the millennium, we have proved ourselves unable to prevent war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and unable to prevent genocide in Rwanda or ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Still, we see flagrant disrespect for international law, humanitarian law and human rights. Children are used as soldiers in Sierra Leone, women are denied all rights in Afghanistan, fundamentalist forces have demonstrating students arrested and possibly sentenced to death in Iran. Other tragic examples can be found in almost all parts of the world.

We can change all that, if only there is political will. It is up to us, the Member States, to ensure that the United Nations and the Security Council are able to uphold international law and their responsibility for international peace and security.

I would like to highlight four key areas that we, the United Nations and its Member States, need to address to make the United Nations truly relevant: the questions of intervention; early action and prevention; nuclear disarmament; and human rights. To succeed, the United Nations system also needs to be reformed, and I will come back to that.

When it comes to intervention to secure peace, regional organizations and arrangements, as well as so-called coalitions of the willing, can have important roles, together with the United Nations, as we have just seen in East Timor. But it is for the Security Council to provide the legal foundation — the mandate — for such action, in particular when force has to be used. Without such a legal foundation, we run the risk of anarchy in international relations, and in fact we undermine the prospects for peace and security; and that long-term perspective must never be lost.

Our responsibility for international peace and security implies that necessary action by the Security Council should not be hindered by a veto. If the Security Council in an urgent situation is paralysed by a veto or a threat of veto, this may undermine the authority and the relevance of the United Nations itself. It also presents the international community with a difficult dilemma.

When human life is threatened on a massive scale, it is not possible to remain passive. Humanitarian intervention has to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, in view of the values at stake and whether all other means have been exhausted. The effects on international law and international security at large have to be considered as well.

As the Secretary-General said yesterday, we must ensure that the Security Council is able to rise to the challenge. It must negotiate in earnest, with creativity and without the threat of veto, to define threats to peace and security at an early stage, and to deal with a crisis before an emergency situation arises. Council action does not necessarily mean the use of force. The use of force almost inevitably causes suffering for the innocent. It should, therefore, only be the last resort. There are many other tools available. The United Nations Charter offers several options.

The most obvious alternative to the use of force is conflict prevention and early action. Member States, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, must share information on conflict situations and early warning signals with the Secretariat. The Secretary-General should be invited to react to such reports and to propose appropriate and timely action to the Security Council. The United Nations offices in the field and early fact-finding missions dispatched to areas of potential conflict could help the Secretary-General formulate such proposals. Academic institutions and non-governmental organizations could also be helpful in this regard.

The Swedish Government has adopted a programme of action to facilitate and contribute to the prevention of armed conflict. It is our hope that this action plan will stimulate a debate on how to change the focus from crisis management to early preventive action in order to promote a culture of prevention.

When considering peacekeeping operations, the Security Council should not be hampered by short-term budgetary considerations. This sends a very negative message and runs counter to the need for early and preventive action. All countries must pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. Naturally, that also goes for the host country. The United Nations must be given the necessary resources to be able to act swiftly upon decisions by the Security Council.

The danger of nuclear devastation has not faded. On the contrary, we are faced with new threats. Last year the positive trend set by Argentina, Brazil and South Africa having joined the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was reversed by India and Pakistan, which both tested nuclear weapons. Their actions have endangered international peace and security, as well as stability in the region, and are a serious setback to our hopes for a world without nuclear weapons.

Sweden will follow up its call of last year for a new agenda for complete nuclear disarmament. India and Pakistan have taken us further away from that goal. We call upon them, and all other States which have not yet done so, to give up their nuclear ambitions. All countries should become parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the NPT.

The five nuclear-weapon States also have a responsibility to complete nuclear disarmament. Deployment of national missile defence systems in the future would create uncertainties and have a negative impact on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We encourage the United States and Russia to re-establish a new momentum in the stalled START negotiations, and especially we call upon Russia to ratify the Start II agreement without further delay. Reductions should be extended to non-strategic nuclear weapons. Furthermore, we urge the three nuclear-weapon States which have not yet done so to ratify the CTBT. All this should be done in an effort aimed at the elimination of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction, which still pose a threat to human beings all over the world.

Any regime violating human rights paves the way for crisis and armed conflict. The defence of human rights is a legitimate concern for the Security Council and the international community. It is our duty to react when the rights of individuals are violated, wherever it happens.

Still, disrespect for democracy and human rights is obvious in many parts of the world. The events in East Timor show how the will of the people can be totally ignored by armed thugs. In Kosovo, innocent civilians are attacked for belonging to a certain ethnic group.

Still, poverty and social injustice deprive people of health and education.

Still, women and girls are facing discrimination. The brutalizing and killing of women is carried out with impunity in many countries. In wars, rape is used as a means of terror. Often women are deprived of their right to earn their own living or participate in the economic and political life of their countries. I urge all countries to adhere to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without reservation.

Still, 10 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the hopes of children for the future are overshadowed by daily hardship and fear. Too often their talents and skills are buried in poverty or diseases which are curable but not attended to. Too often they are denied proper education, or suffer from discriminatory school systems. The recruitment of child soldiers is a shameful practice that causes individual suffering and will harm the security and development of societies for many years to come. I appeal to all Governments to assist in the conclusion of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to prohibit sexual abuse of children and the use of children below the age of 18 in armed conflict.

The use of the death penalty has no place in a civilized society. Sweden welcomes moves taken in a number of countries to put an end to this repugnant practice. The abolition of the death penalty would enhance human dignity worldwide.

Still, the ugly face of racism appears in all parts of the world. Manifestations of racism are an affront to the fundamental principle of non-discrimination and a threat to the fragile fabric of peaceful relations between people in an increasingly global community. The preparations

for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance provide an important opportunity to identify concrete and action-oriented ways to combat racism. Another important manifestation will be the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, to be held in January 2000.

The early entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court would send a clear signal that the international community is determined to end the culture of impunity for the most heinous crimes under international law. Sweden is committed to early ratification, and we urge all countries to be similarly committed.

As I said at the outset, in order to have an efficient and relevant United Nations, not paralysed by the veto and able to cope with the challenges of conflict prevention, nuclear disarmament and the protection of human rights, we also need reforms. In particular, we need to strengthen the United Nations capacity for conflict prevention and to address root causes of conflict. This is a moral imperative as well as a humanitarian, political and economic necessity.

The Security Council should be enlarged to better reflect the realities of today's international relations. A geographical balance is important in this regard so that the Council can become truly representative of the international community.

The use of the veto, or even the threat of its use, hampers the work of the Council. We support the proposal that as a first step the right of veto should be limited to decisions on enforcement action under Chapter VII of the Charter. We would also like to see the five permanent members agreeing on a moratorium on the use of the veto.

The Security Council should be more transparent and open. This would contribute to the acceptance and legitimacy of its decisions. The Council should be able to hear the views of all relevant parties to a conflict without the implication of political recognition.

The involvement of humanitarian organizations in the Council's deliberations would enhance the quality of its decisions. The humanitarian consequences of Security Council action should always be taken into consideration. This is particularly important when sanctions are imposed.

Sweden welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the Secretariat and modernize its management culture, and we appreciate the improved efficiency that has followed. Reform is not only about cost-cutting. The aim must be to revitalize the Organization and the multilateral system to cope with the many challenges before us.

Long-term security is closely linked to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. We need to strengthen not only the United Nations capacity to provide humanitarian assistance but also its long-term social and economic development efforts.

A basic problem is the lack of funds. The donor community needs to ensure sufficient and predictable financial resources to allow the reforms to produce long-term results. Sweden is one of only four countries that meet the United Nations aid target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. Development requires a true partnership between countries, ensuring sufficient external resources, sound use of internal resources and good governance.

The reform process has to continue, and we look forward to the Millennium Assembly and the summit next year as an opportunity to accelerate the work.

We all have a tendency to blame the United Nations for our own failures and shortcomings. In fact, when the United Nations fails, it is because we fail. If the United Nations loses its relevance, we lose. There is no real alternative to global cooperation to cope with increasingly global problems, and for this, we need the United Nations — but a strengthened and reformed United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, it gives me pleasure to extend to you, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I am confident that your experience, diplomatic skills and political ability will contribute effectively and positively to the success of the session's proceedings.

I should also like to express my thanks to your predecessor, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the prudent manner in which he directed the work of the previous session.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts in strengthening the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

We welcome the admission of the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to membership in the United Nations, which strengthens its universality.

As this session convenes on the eve of the third millennium, the international environment remains plagued by a multitude of problems and challenges, the most salient of which are manifest in the ever-increasing growth of the phenomena of poverty, environmental pollution, armed conflicts, ethnic and religious cleansing, the race to acquire proscribed weapons, organized crime, drugs and international terrorism in its various forms and manifestations.

Dealing with such global problems and phenomena requires that all States adhere to the Charter of the United Nations, respect international law and work on strengthening the mechanisms for cooperation among nations, including the completion of the structural reforms in the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

In this connection, we express our appreciation for the positive role played by the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations in providing emergency humanitarian and development assistance to the many peoples affected by the consequences of conflicts and by natural and other disasters.

The course of political events and the wars that raged in the Arab Gulf region in the past two decades, as well as their political, economic and social implications, have more than ever before reinforced the conviction of the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council of the importance of consolidating the bonds of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the States of the region and the other members of the international community. This must be based on the principles of good neighbourliness, confidence-building measures, peaceful coexistence, non-intervention in the internal affairs of countries, mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, renunciation of the threat or use of force and the settlement of existing disputes through dialogue and peaceful means. In addition regional and international cooperation and the strengthening of national capabilities must be reinforced and encouraged, particularly in the fields of social, economic, cultural and human development.

It is this conviction that underlies the position of the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council in providing various forms of humanitarian and development assistance to the many countries of the third world that have been affected by wars, conflicts and natural disasters, the most recent of which was the allocation of $400 million for financing reconstruction and development in the earthquake-stricken areas of Turkey.

The continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of three United Arab Emirates islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, for almost 29 years stands out in stark contrast not only to the clearly peaceful attitudes adopted by the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, but also reveals the true intentions of Iran, which persists in violating the territorial integrity of the United Arab Emirates. We had hoped that the Iranian political discourse on this issue would be translated into practical and positive steps in response to the peaceful initiatives of our Head of State, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan. Those initiatives, which had met with the support and backing of all friendly and fraternal States, called for either entering into serious bilateral negotiations, with transparent intentions, or accepting the submission of the dispute to the International Court of Justice.

We had also welcomed the establishment of a three-member ministerial committee by the Gulf Cooperation Council to be charged with developing a mechanism for the start of serious negotiations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The underlying hope is that a peaceful, just and lasting settlement be reached, one that would bring to an end the Iranian occupation of our three islands.

It is truly regrettable that the consecutive Iranian Governments, rather than dealing with our peaceful initiatives in a spirit of responsibility and political will, have deliberately resorted to a policy of escalation and provocation. They have done so by carrying out naval and aerial military manoeuvres, by establishing civilian and military installations on our occupied islands, and by relentlessly seeking to change their demographic, legal and historical characteristics. The aim is to consolidate the Iranian occupation of these islands and to establish a fait accompli by force.

Such actions represent a direct threat to regional and international security and stability. We consider these Iranian excesses null and void, with no legal validity or basis in the rules of international law or in the Charter of the United Nations or that of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. They are also inconsistent with the documented fact that, historically and legally, these three islands are an integral part of the territorial sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates, regardless of the duration of their occupation.

The security of the Arab Gulf is the collective and joint responsibility of the States of the region. Therefore we stress the importance of promoting a political and diplomatic dialogue as well as cooperation between those States and of channelling their wealth and human and natural resources towards achieving the desired economic and social development for their peoples.

In this context, we call upon the Iraqi Government to complete its implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular those relating to the fate, whereabouts and release of Kuwaiti nationals and citizens of other countries who are detained or held as prisoners of war by Iraq. This is in addition to the return of Kuwaiti property, documents and archives, an act that would contribute to Iraq's resuming its natural role at the regional and international levels.

The inhumane conditions visited upon the Iraqi people make it incumbent upon all of us to seek an early end to their suffering. We therefore call upon the Security Council, and in particular its permanent members, to reach consensus on the draft projects before it that would lead to the full implementation of all its resolutions and to lifting the international economic sanctions imposed on Iraq while emphasizing the importance of respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Proceeding from its belief in the need to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the principle of land for peace and on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the United Arab Emirates welcomes the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum and the preliminary contacts between the Palestinian and Israeli sides regarding the final status negotiations, which are to deal with the issues of Jerusalem, settlements, refugees and borders.

We attach great importance to the political developments that will lead to the realization of the objectives and aspirations on which the peace process is based — namely, the achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and of the Middle East problem. We call upon the Israeli Government to implement fully and scrupulously, and without further delay or obstructions, all of the obligations and commitments it has assumed within the framework of these agreements. I refer in particular to those relating to halting settlement activities and policies in various parts of occupied Palestinian land and other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and to the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the international community and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In applauding the positive role played by the United States of America in reviving the peace process, we express the hope that further efforts will be made by the co-sponsors of the process and by the members of the European Union and other influential States to persuade the Israeli Government to fulfil its historical, political and legal obligations that are based on the principles of international law and the principle of land for peace. This would restore to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights and would enable them to exercise self-determination and establish their own independent state in Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

We also reiterate our full and unqualified support for the position of Lebanon and demand that the Government of Israel implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978). That resolution calls for the Israeli forces to withdraw, without any preconditions, from southern Lebanon and from the West Bekaa Valley, and to resume negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks at the point where they were cut off. The aim is to ensure a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The acquisition and possession of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, are contrary to the objectives and recommendations unanimously adopted by members of the international community at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This not only contributes to the escalation of the proscribed arms race and the heightening of tensions, but also disrupts the security balance at the regional and international levels.

Consonant with its position that favours the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance and necessity of establishing a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the region of the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf. It renews its call to the international community to exert greater efforts, demanding that Israel accede to the NPT and place all of its nuclear facilities under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in order to ensure peace and security in the region and the attainment of the desired economic and social development.

The member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council followed with keen interest the recent developments in East Timor and the pressures placed on the Republic of Indonesia despite its acceptance of the results of the referendum in that territory. In this connection, we welcome the positive stance of the Indonesian Government, especially its readiness to provide necessary support for the peaceful transfer of authority in that territory, in cooperation with the United Nations. We therefore stress the importance of respecting the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia in order to restore security and stability in that region.

The continuing state of conflict between our two friends, India and Pakistan, over the question of Kashmir, is a source of profound concern to us because it constitutes a direct threat to regional and global security and stability. We therefore invite both Governments to exercise a policy of self-restraint and to resort to dialogue and peaceful negotiations in settling their differences, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the rules and regulations of international law and the provisions of the recent Lahore accord. We also support all efforts designed to bring about peaceful resolutions of the conflicts in South-East Asia and the Korean peninsula.

The international community recently followed the developments of the deplorable events to which the people of Kosovo, particularly the Muslims, were subjected. These events included ethnic and religious cleansing, population displacements and other heinous crimes by Yugoslav and Serbian forces, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

The United Arab Emirates, acting on high-level instructions from an informed leadership, was one of the first countries to participate in the international relief operation. Our armed forces, together with the Red Crescent Society and other humanitarian organizations, provided humanitarian, medical, food and development assistance to the people of Kosovo. In addition, military troops from the Emirates participated in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, helping to ensure the return of the refugees to their homes and land, maintain internal security and initiate and develop vital projects such as schools, roads and hospitals. It is essential for international efforts to continue in order to provide the people of Kosovo with security and humanitarian guarantees and enable them to achieve their legitimate aspirations. It is also in the interest of establishing peace and security in the Balkans.

Despite the positive initiatives by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, and by the Organization of African Unity to contain conflicts, resolve the internal and regional security problems which plague certain States in Africa and promote national reconciliation between the various political factions, conditions there remain, regrettably unstable. We therefore call upon the States concerned to assume their historic and political responsibilities and resolve their problems by peaceful means so as to enable the peoples of Africa to achieve their aspirations for peace and sustainable development.

In this context, we should like to reiterate that the sanctions imposed on Libya must be lifted now that it has implemented the Security Council resolutions in respect of the Lockerbie issue.

Notwithstanding the relatively positive changes in international economic relations, the liberalization of world trade and multilateral cooperation in the fields of development, finance and trade, the economic and social gap between developed and developing countries is still widening. The consequences of the financial crises in the countries of South-East Asia and elsewhere continue to be felt: they have contributed to the decline in economic growth in many States. Dealing with these and other similar dysequilibria will require a comprehensive and objective assessment of financial, investment, customs tariff and trade arrangements with a view to initiating North-South and South-South dialogue to promote mutually beneficial cooperation and coordination.

In this connection, the relevant international and regional development institutions have an important role to play in ensuring the stability of the world economic and financial order, a continued flow of development assistance from developed to developing countries and cancellation of the poorest countries debts. Cooperation

at the bilateral, regional and subregional levels is also a positive step towards stabilizing international economic relations and, if carried out on the basis of complementarity, equality and justice, should enable the developing countries to become effective participants and should ensure regional and international security and stability.

In conclusion, we express the hope that the preparatory meetings for the Millennium Assembly in 2000 will have a positive outcome, leading to the fulfilment of our countries' and peoples' aspirations for peace, security and sustainable development.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes, on whom I now call.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I sincerely congratulate Mr. Gurirab on his election as President of the General Assembly at this session, the last to be held before the start of the new millennium, and I wish him great success in the performance of his duties. At the same time I wish to thank his predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, for the effective way in which he presided over the previous Assembly.

Spain subscribes fully to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland on behalf of the States members of the European Union and should like to contribute to this general debate by presenting my delegation's point of view with regard to the complex problems facing the United Nations at this time.

I should also like to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Spain offers them its full cooperation in the tasks that await them as new Members of the Organization.

This has, indeed, been a difficult year for the Organization. Serious crises have arisen in different parts of the world and, at times, the role played in them by the United Nations has been questioned. We are all aware of the efforts made by the Secretary-General to enable the Organization fully to play the role for which it was founded in 1945. However, in certain sectors of international public opinion the idea has taken hold that the United Nations has been incapable of assuming its central and proper role in such situations.

Like any human institution, the United Nations has had its successes and its failures. Nevertheless, it has been a key factor in international relations throughout the second half of the twentieth century and it continues to be so on the threshold of the twenty-first. It fulfils an essential function, which will have to be progressively strengthened as the phenomenon of globalization develops. It is indeed a unique instrument for the international relations we are sharing for the twenty-first century.

It is obvious that, while acknowledging the unique value of the United Nations, we must revise some aspects of the way in which it operates. That is why the process of reform undertaken by the Secretary-General is so important. We must continue to make further progress in that direction.

I should like to stress that Spain does not think of the reform of the United Nations as an exercise whose sole and essential objective is to save money. Rather, we consider such reform to be a way of enabling it successfully to meet the challenges of the new century.

A key aspect of this process is the reform of the Security Council. Spain believes that such reform must pursue three basic goals. First, there must be greater transparency in its working methods, with an increase in the number and the quality of the consultations, both between the countries that make up the Council and between those countries and other Member States. Secondly, it should be more efficient, for which purpose it would be advisable to limit the exercise of the right of veto. There are instances in which the exercise of this right, or even the more or less veiled threat to exercise it, has blocked the functioning of the Security Council and prevented the adoption of essential decisions that enjoyed a broad consensus within the international community. To a large extent, that has promoted the image of the United Nations as inefficient and impotent in the eyes of some sectors of public opinion. Thirdly, it should be made more democratic, which would mean adapting the Council's composition to recent developments in the international community. In current circumstances, and given the split between Member States, it seems possible to reach a sufficient consensus only with regard to the idea of increasing the number of non-permanent members. Spain is in favour of increasing the representation on the Security Council of all regional groups.

Delays in the payment of contributions by some States are unjustifiable and endanger the very operation of the Organization at the very time when it is called

upon to carry out increasingly complex tasks. It is not possible to tolerate the current level of non-payment and at the same time require the United Nations to set up the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to organize the transition to independence in East Timor, to establish international criminal courts, to deal with the plight of refugees, to send peacekeeping forces to various parts of the world, and to allocate sufficient resources to its numerous development programmes.

I would like my Government's position on this subject to be properly understood. Spain is the eighth-largest contributor to the Organization's regular budget, and as such has a very direct interest in matters such as budgetary discipline and the effective use of resources. Moreover, Spain considers that all matters of concern to Member States on this issue can and must be thoroughly discussed. What is not acceptable, however, is for anyone to make payment conditional on the granting of unilateral demands.

The coming Millennium Assembly will provide a good opportunity to reflect on all these issues, as well as on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. That Assembly, in the preparation of which civil society will participate, must likewise encourage vigorous debate yielding concrete results. That debate must, in my opinion, focus on two main issues: the elimination of poverty and the consequences of globalization.

A policy to eliminate poverty involves, *inter alia*, a strategy of conflict prevention, sustainable development policies, good governance and the regular provision of funds for development financing. All these mean that efforts must be pooled and responsibilities shared by developed and developing States alike.

Globalization is a phenomenon that involves risks, but that also creates opportunities. The risk is that the weakest countries and the most defenceless sectors of the population will be marginalized from its benefits. Clearly, decisive action by Governments is needed, along with international cooperation. Threats to cultural and linguistic plurality likewise require decisive defensive measures.

At the same time, globalization also generates opportunities and benefits: economic growth, better communications and greater access to information, as well as possibilities for bringing different peoples and cultures closer together. It is especially here that the unique value of the United Nations is most striking. In the face of all these new global problems, which go far beyond the capacity of States for individual action, only a multilateral response will suffice, the result of dialogue and international cooperation. The United Nations is the most appropriate forum for this.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, only the United Nations, in the final analysis, has the legitimacy necessary to authorize them. This year Spain has doubled the number of troops that it contributes to these operations; they are currently deployed in United Nations missions in Guatemala, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and East Timor. To this should be added the large number of troops that my country has placed at the service of missions authorized by Security Council resolutions, such as the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and KFOR. Spain participated in the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA) until its recent termination, and is now cooperating with the project to strengthen African capabilities for peacekeeping operations.

As a reflection of my country's commitment, Spain will in the next few weeks sign a memorandum of understanding on placing a rapidly deployable peacekeeping force at the disposal of the United Nations.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, it is no longer tolerable to mankind's ethical conscience that atrocities and war crimes should go unpunished. But until recently the international community had not channeled these generalized feelings into a course of concrete action. Yet again, it was the United Nations that did this, by convening the Rome Conference at which the Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted. Spain signed the Statute, and the ratification process is now at an advanced stage. Moreover, Spain has taken initiatives to promote the signing and ratification of the treaty in order that it may enter into force as soon as possible.

The United Nations has made a vital contribution to the universalization of human rights. Having been elected a member of the Commission on Human Rights for a three-year period, Spain will continue to cooperate with the United Nations in the defence of these rights in line with one of the basic tenets of its foreign policy.

Closely related to this issue is the concept of human security. At a previous session of the General Assembly, Spain took the initiative to propose a draft resolution on the safety and security of international humanitarian personnel, which was ultimately adopted as resolution 52/167. The activity of the Special Committee on Children and Armed Conflict is especially important at this time, as is the significant work of the Secretary-

General's Special Representative on this matter, Mr. Olara Otunnu. The recent Security Council resolution 1261 (1999) is a major step forward in the approach to this problem.

Development cooperation is undoubtedly one of the main global issues on the United Nations agenda. The special meeting on development financing planned for 2001 must be properly prepared, and the follow-up of the major conferences must continue.

Spain attaches special importance to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative, whose scope and depth must be enhanced. In the wake of hurricane Mitch, Spain initiated debt-cancellation programmes for the most harshly affected countries of the Central American region.

My country has made a substantial effort in recent years in respect of its development cooperation programmes. Not many years ago Spain was an aid recipient, while it now stands above the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average in the percentage of its gross domestic product devoted to development. In 1998, official development assistance funds grew by 14 per cent, placing Spain among the three developed countries which had most increased these funds during the year.

With regard to disarmament, the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament will continue to prepare for a conference on small arms to be held in 2001, and will attempt to offset recent reversals in the non-proliferation regime. It is essential that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should speedily enter into force, and that difficulties in the preparation of the next review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons be overcome.

It is also necessary to conclude negotiations on a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and to address the issue of fissile materials.

There are many other global issues on which the United Nations plays a vital role, such as the fight against terrorism, drugs and organized crime. However, I should like to dwell for a moment on another matter to which my Government attaches great importance: problems of ageing and of older people. Spain wishes to contribute to the debate on an international strategy on older people based on the existing model in my country. Spain has also submitted its candidacy as the venue for the second World Assembly on Ageing, which could be convened in 2002.

Finally, allow me to refer to the problem of decolonization. At the conclusion of this Decade for the Eradication of Colonization, my country continues to endure the presence of a colonial enclave on its territory. Gibraltar was occupied by British troops in 1704, during one of the European wars of succession. The Territory was turned into a military base and the Spanish population was expelled. Until very recently Spanish citizens in Gibraltar suffered grave discrimination in the exercise of their rights.

General Assembly resolution 2353 (XXII) backed the Spanish views on the decolonization of the Territory, recognizing that Gibraltar's colonial situation should be settled not through self-determination, but, rather, through the restoration of Spanish territorial integrity. Unfortunately, its terms have been ignored by the colonial Power. Spain and Great Britain began a process of negotiation on all the issues, including sovereignty, based on the 1984 Brussels Declaration, but no significant progress has been made. Spain has made a proposal to the United Kingdom that takes into account the interests of the inhabitants of the colony and would allow for the recovery of sovereignty over the Territory after a lengthy period, so far without reply. My Government will continue both its dialogue with the United Kingdom and cooperation with the decolonization Committee in following up on this issue.

From the crises the world has lived through this year, we must learn certain lessons. One is without doubt that the political resolution of the crisis in Kosovo has only been possible thanks to the United Nations, which faced an urgent challenge, and on the success or failure of its response depends to a large extent the public image of our Organization.

In the Western Sahara Spain has supported with concrete measures the action of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and also the Secretary-General's settlement plan. It is willing to increase this support if asked to do so by the Organization and if the parties directly involved agree.

The new possibilities in the Middle East after the signing of the Sharm-el Sheikh Memorandum are seen by my country with great hope, and we are firmly committed to continue cooperating with all sides so that the process begun in Madrid continues on track.

Other regions of the world have suffered particularly during this past year. Unfortunately, this is especially true of Africa, and therefore I wish to emphasize my country's support for the integrated approach taken by the Secretary-General in treating the causes of the conflicts and promoting peace on that continent.

Finally, the most recent challenge to the United Nations is the situation in East Timor. Spain welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999), and is willing to contribute to the multinational force to guarantee security in the Territory. My country, likewise, has announced a special contribution to the fund established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees(UNHCR) to deal urgently with the acute humanitarian situation and the refugee problems on the island.

The Organization's undertakings are sometimes visible, at other times hidden, but they are always indispensable. The citizens of our countries must value them so that the United Nations may enjoy the backing that it needs in order to perform its important duties effectively.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, Spain reiterates yet again its firm commitment to the Organization and its willingness to put its capacity for external action at the service of the purposes and principles enumerated in the Charter.

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Flores (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to comment on the references to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and other parts of Spanish territory, made in the speech this afternoon by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, a country with which Spain maintains, and wants to continue to maintain, excellent relations.

I would like to repeat that the places mentioned are an integral part of Spanish territory, whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament on precisely the same footing and under the same conditions as their compatriots.

Mr. Kourosh (Iran): Some claims raised today by the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates against the territorial integrity of my country are unacceptable and baseless. Since our position on this issue is very clear, I need not get into specifics. I would just like to emphasize that my country is fully committed to its international obligations, including those arising from the 1971 Understanding. We have friendly ties with our neighbours in the Persian Gulf, and we stand ready, as in the past, to enter into substantive discussion with United Arab Emirates officials in good faith and with no preconditions in order to solve any possible problem.

Our message to our neighbours, including the United Arab Emirates, is one of friendship, fraternity and cooperation. We continue to make efforts to strengthen confidence and cooperation in the Persian Gulf region. Consolidation of peace and security is a matter of great importance in our region, and in this context my country has so far spared no efforts to further the cause of peace and security in the region.

Mr. Richmond (United Kingdom): I would like to say a few words in response to the remarks by the Foreign Minister of Spain about Gibraltar. The long-standing position of the British Government on this matter is well known to the Government of Spain. I will simply restate it briefly here.

British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, the British Government stands by the commitment to the people of Gibraltar contained in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution of Gibraltar, which states that the United Kingdom will not enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

The British Government believes that issues relating to Gibraltar can be resolved only by direct talks, such as those established under the 1984 Brussels Declaration. In that regard, we attach importance to continuing the dialogue with Spain as a means to overcoming our differences.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Iran made a statement in response to the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates on the question of his country's occupation of our three islands. This statement has not added to the positions of Iran, which continue to threaten peace and stability in the region. They run contrary to the statement made in this forum by President Khatami on the dialogue of civilizations, which must be based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and on respect for international law, not the occupation of the territories of others.

I would like here to remind the representative of Iran that the chief of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard last week adopted positions that threaten the security of the region, by threatening to use force if the United Arab Emirates were to restore its legitimate rights in the three islands. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates has reiterated our firm position regarding Iran's occupation of our three islands. We will continue our efforts and peaceful endeavours to put an end to this situation. It is our hope that Iran, our neighbour, will respond to our peaceful initiatives — which enjoy the support both of the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and of the international community — to ensure the stability, security and safety of our region, and to improve the relations between the members of the GCC and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting rose at 7.35 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.8

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth Session

Official Records

8th Plenary meeting
Wednesday, 22 September 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Facussé (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express my pleasure at your recent election, Mr. President. I also wish to acknowledge the work of your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, also deserves acknowledgement for his untiring efforts to ensure that peace and security govern international relations in this turbulent world in which we live, always showing sensitivity and a very special concern for those who suffer the most, have the least, and therefore need the greatest care.

Almost a year ago, Central America was tragically struck by one of the most terrible hurricanes of the century. Our country, Honduras, was the most severely damaged, with billions of dollars in losses resulting from the destruction of more than 70 per cent of its infrastructure and economy. More than 15,000 people were killed, injured or went missing and more than 1.5 million suffered losses, either directly or indirectly, a high percentage of whom lost their homes, belongings and businesses in their entirety.

Those unfortunate circumstances through which we had to live, the consequences of which we have only just begun to recover from, have been aggravated in recent weeks by the severity of the winter and high levels of precipitation. Once again, the banks of our country's main rivers have overflowed, as it was not possible to dredge them because of lack of time and resources. This is again jeopardizing the safety of numerous population centres and cities, causing more flooding and mudslides and blocking the country's main transportation arteries. This has brought further insecurity and anguish to our population, adding new losses and difficulties to the already grave state of affairs we have faced since last October.

Hurricane Mitch and other natural phenomena of uncommon violence lay bare the physical vulnerability of our countries and highlight the absolute necessity of early and organized preventive measures. Such preventive measures can be achieved at the national, regional, continental and, indeed, global levels only through combined, joint efforts and resources. No country, much less a country that is poor in material resources, is up to the task of bearing the massive destructive power of these

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phenomena alone. This is a huge new challenge for the United Nations, whose diligent attention to this matter we take this opportunity to request, knowing that it stands to save thousands upon thousands of lives, spare us enormous damage, and deflect immense ills.

We, the Honduran people, have always valued the world's solidarity, for which we are most grateful, and have also learned that brotherhood among men and among nations is a value that we must not lose. On the contrary, we must revitalize, strengthen and disseminate it, especially now that globalization and high-speed communications are drawing States and continents closer together, making it possible for one nation instantly to feel the pain that afflicts another as if it affected us all directly.

More than neighbours, we must be brethren. Beyond cooperation, we must sow the seeds of brotherhood. Solidarity is a fine thing, but brotherhood is stronger and more human, because it breathes from the depth of our hearts that divine, universal breath of life with which God endows each and every one of his creatures so that we should be equal and enjoy the planet's wealth as equals.

Since its founding in 1945, the United Nations has played a preeminent role in the life of our planet. The 50 nations that met at San Francisco, California, among which the Honduran people were honoured to count ourselves, and that signed the United Nations Charter, have increased in number over the years. Some have changed, while others have disappeared as multinational or federated structures. Therefore, the challenges that the next century will place before the United Nations are new, even greater challenges, and most likely will be even more difficult and will arise ever more frequently.

The growing victories of human rights; the accelerated expansion of democracy as a system of governance and coexistence among peoples; the rights of women and children, and the imperative to protect both against abuse, discrimination and violence: these are matters that challenge the creative imagination of the world's peoples and Governments. They are paradigms for a new millennium, whose portals we approach with a watchful mind and a hopeful heart.

Peace; the environment; population growth; the abandonment of the fields and the forced, chaotic urbanization of our cities — which have thus become ruralized; issues of food; the vast differences between a small cluster of rich nations and an immense universe of nations that are in a permanent process of pauperization; and the eradication of weapons of mass destruction: these are but a few of the topics that transcend the boundaries of the centuries. These issues demand new approaches and solutions formulated in the light of the experiences that this waning century leaves us.

Now, when the end of the twentieth century enables us to be exceptionally privileged witnesses to a change of millennium, is a time for reflection, so that we may harvest the century's finest fruits and bear them across the bridge between the centuries. However, we must not carry to the other frontier of time those things that in this century have produced the great disasters of war and agonizing tensions on the international scene; nor must we hold on to those that have segregated peoples and dismembered entire States or that have spawned the marginalization and exclusion that still torment a large part of humanity.

It is of the utmost necessity, then, that fraternity should return to its rightful place in the triangle of liberal principles, the very ideals that gave birth to the rule of law and the concept of constitutionality, to harmony and equality among individuals and among nations, thus shaping democratic States and the paradigm of human freedom as the basis of the existence of humankind, its very *raison d'être* on this planet.

We say that the elder siblings among the community of nations must adopt the concept of fraternity as a principle and a guiding ethic for international coexistence with their brethren, so that together — without exclusion, without the yawning chasms that separate the great from the small, the wealthy from the impoverished — we may all cross to the other side of the millennium with a new outlook of justice, opportunity and hope, for the sake of all that we are as the human race, and for the sake of all the efforts, sacrifices and suffering expended in our attempts to dodge the blows of economic disparity and unjust treatment in finance and markets. Yet we have remained steadfast, and continue to do so through titanic efforts and countless sacrifices, to avoid being left behind by development, cultural trends and the scientific and technological benefits of transportation and communications. We have struggled for all of this while giving our heroes and martyrs to the cause of freedom; we stretch as far as we can to develop democratic rule in our States. We struggle each and every day to make democratic rule able to govern, credible, hope-inspiring and trustworthy in the eyes and hearts of the many who do not always have the patience to wait until the benefits

of the system materialize, who despair and grow weary of dreaming dreams that are difficult to attain.

For democracy to survive the times and to justify the high price that we have paid for it, it must respond to the concerns and aspirations of peoples. Protecting against regression in what so many have paid dearly to achieve; preserving the advances we have made; and finding a way to ensure that there will respond in a positive way for the benefit of peoples: these are the greatest challenges that we carry with us as we meet the coming millennium.

Central Americans have learned, through bitter experience and a painful toll of blood and sacrifice, that fraternity is a higher value than mere neighbourliness, that cooperation and understanding yield better fruit for us than past rivalries and local nationalisms and that there is no difference, however serious it may appear, that we cannot resolve in a peaceful, harmonious and civilized manner.

A few days ago the presidents of El Salvador and Honduras set a beautiful example for the continent and the world when they ratified the Convention on Nationality and Acquired Rights which covers the inhabitants of the areas delimited by the Judgment of 11 September 1992 of the International Court of Justice in the land, island and maritime frontier dispute between El Salvador and Honduras. With this action, we have resolved, definitively and in perpetuity, the frontier dispute which for many years cast a pall over our fraternal relations.

The Central American bloc is today working towards access to the United States market under conditions as advantageous as those already enjoyed by other partners to our north; also, as a region we are seeking to open up the field for ourselves in trade throughout the continent through agreements with other existing blocs and with individual nations, including Mexico and countries of South America.

Central America is preparing to cross the bridge between the millennia with all its republics more integrated with each other than ever before, identifying with each other in the common ideal of keeping ourselves united so that we are stronger, of playing a stellar role in the American continent, of turning the isthmus into a point of strategic convergence for world trade, and of writing ourselves into a success story that will serve as an example and touchstone to the world community.

The globalization process, which has accelerated over the last decade, will continue to expand, creating challenges and chances, problems and opportunities. The dizzying flows of capital which in a single day can wreak catastrophic collapse on the economies of entire countries and regions must surely merit special attention from this Organization. Our peoples fail to understand why they should be affected by breakdowns in the financial system arising out of risk-taking and speculative flows in regions of the world that are remote, alien and even unknown to them. We are affected by them although we play no part in them and are not to blame for them, yet they raise the prices of our staples, rob us of development opportunities, impoverish us even further and make life harder for us. Globalization ought to be an experience that generates broader possibilities and greater opportunities for all countries and for all people, not greater imbalances and inequalities.

In stark contrast to the elimination of customs and border posts and to equal access to markets stands the need to reinforce the identity of ethnic groups, nations, countries and regions. Cultural diversity is a source of legitimate pride, and of wealth, creativity and global complementarity. Automation of mass production cannot and should not make human behaviour, the most precious resource on our planet, automatic. Homogenizing the world's cultural diversity, by whatever means, would be as serious and unthinkable as eliminating the planet's biodiversity.

The world's age-old desire for a new world order based on peace, cooperation and fraternity between all countries rather than on a balance of arms between powerful and hegemonic States has already come to pass. Although there are still some local problems, and although some old nationalisms are once again raising the flag, the world is generally a much more peaceful and stable place than it was 100 years ago. Although small groups of terrorists are still rattling various countries in the old world and the new, the truth is that, broadly speaking, we live in a world which is more peaceful — thank God — than the one our forebears knew. That is why we must indeed acknowledge that, despite all its imperfections, the world has brought in a new world order at the end of this century and the dawn of the new, an order led by the United Nations.

In this new world order which we are seeing at the end of the second millennium, there is no more room for the struggle left us by the Cold War, much less for Europe's various hegemonies of the past three centuries. Nor is there any possibility that one State alone can dominate the rest, as neither the human capacity nor the

material resources exist to do so. Rather than the balance of compulsion upon which the politics of coexistence between the world's strongest States was based, what predominates now is multiple independence, complementarity between States and international cooperation and, of course, teamwork as much in the quest for peace as in coping with civilian crises and natural disasters.

Even a superficial look at events north and south, east and west gives us an inkling that peace, international trade and the fact that States now have no choice but to cooperate with each other have levelled the playing field in international relations: on the world stage, it is now not so much a State's economic clout or military capability that determine whether its voice is heard in the debate but rather its moral force, and especially its democratic values and its ideals in terms of protecting human rights. In our specific context here, there are no more big States and small States, just members of the world community whether committed or not to the common task of making Planet Earth a real and effective place for human happiness for everyone without exception.

With this in mind Honduras, together with the other representatives of this great community, the United Nations, celebrates the new world order in which all of us are needed and are even indispensable to maintaining and developing it. A crisis between one State and another, or any internal difficulties arising out of conflicts rooted in inequity or because of nationalist, racial or religious demands, are no longer matters to be shrugged off.

On the contrary, today, with the globalized view of the Earth, each State assumes responsibility for its own protection, not merely for its own sake, but because in that way it guarantees the life and happiness of humankind for centuries to come.

Difficulties such as those in East Timor, the crisis in Kosovo, the increasing nuclearization of the Indian subcontinent or the rise in terrorism in Colombia and Russia are issues that concern us all. Although not all countries participate in each peacekeeping and humanitarian mission, there is a disposition and openness in each and every one of their inhabitants to respond to the calls for international solidarity, whose strongest voice is that of the United Nations, and especially that of its Secretary-General. In the Sahara, for several years now Honduran soldiers have participated in peacekeeping missions under United Nations command. We are sure that, like us, no other country skimps when it comes to offering cooperation and making sacrifices.

Both the intervention of the Security Council in the Kosovo conflict just recently and the organization of an international peacekeeping force for East Timor illustrate the efficacy of this system, which makes all of us brethren, neighbours, friends and partners.

It is undeniable that, even as the world has changed and with obvious respect among all States, the United Nations still operates using the mechanisms that were established at its founding in 1945. The limited number of Member States on the Security Council leaves out other States that, because of their contribution to the development of the world, should participate in the high-level decisions of that important organism of our Organization.

Likewise, we believe it is time to provide alternatives so that the veto power enjoyed by certain States is limited to certain matters and certain circumstances, and so that the mere protection of private interests does not have excessive influence or provide justification for aggressions directed at the rest of the world community. To end the practice whereby the veto serves as the Organization's last word should be a goal to which all of the States represented here dedicate ample time and consideration.

The incorporation of three new Members into this Organization fills us with joy and hope, while inspiring confidence that the Organization will treat the Republic of China in the same manner — that, as Taiwan expects, the new world order will be reflected in greater respect for the rights and values of Taiwan's inhabitants, including renewed respect for its aspirations to participate fully in the greatest human organization on Earth. I do not wish to miss this opportunity to express the solidarity of the people of Honduras and of all Central America with the people of Taiwan as they suffer the terrible misfortune that is afflicting that sister region of the world.

To summarize, with regard to the new world order, which we hope will prevail in this global forum, Honduras supports broader representation of the peoples and the nations of the world, and a more just and balanced representation in the discussions and decisions of the United Nations.

Almost a year ago, my country was lashed by the most fearsome and destructive hurricane in history. Along with causing suffering among a noble and stoical people, the tragedy made evident the sensitivity and diligence of international cooperation and fraternity. Marked by authentic sincerity and dedication to the highest values of brotherhood, in which we profoundly believe, messages of concern poured in from all over the world, along with assistance, which continues to flow, enabling the people and Government to reconstruct what the hurricane wrecked.

Thanks to that fraternity, we have moved forward in the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction and created a foundation for the transformation of Honduras — and the same applies to Central America. I hereby declare that we, the people of Honduras — with the tears from this recent and painful event still fresh, and while facing a new round of anguish — are back on our feet, brimming with the vibrant spirit of utmost hope, ready to become a success story in this world, to convert tragedy into opportunity.

Regarding the cooperation that most of the countries present here have offered and continue to offer us, we take this occasion, on behalf of the Honduran people and the Government over which I preside by the sovereign will of its citizens, to extend our most heartfelt gratitude to all, and likewise to confirm before the Assembly Honduras's desire to reciprocate — in a way that is commensurate with the greatness of its heart and the legitimacy of its democratic institutions — for all that the world has with such deep affection provided us in our time of trouble.

All I would add is our most respectful request that cooperating institutions and nations expedite the resources and projects that they have committed to Honduras's reconstruction, which we urgently require now more than ever.

On this occasion our country, never forgetting that it is a founding Member of the United Nations, calls for a reform of our Organization so that a new order, based on worldwide cooperation and fraternity, can guarantee for all of us that the Earth was created not for the strongest and the most powerful, but for all human beings.

May God bless all nations. May God illuminate us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Paraguay, His Excellency Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President González Macchi (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to greet the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, whom I congratulate on his election and offer all the cooperation of the delegation of Paraguay in his work.

In greeting Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I congratulate him on his excellent work for the Organization and reaffirm the full support of the Republic of Paraguay for his efforts on behalf of world peace.

At the same time, the delegation of Paraguay wishes to welcome the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to membership of the United Nations. We are convinced that their work will contribute to international peace and development and that their presence among us is further evidence of the universalization foreseen under the Charter.

This regular session of the General Assembly finds Paraguay at a crucial moment in its political life and for its expectations for economic and social development. The Paraguayans have very recently overcome internal destabilization. However, a rapid, broad and heroic mobilization of the citizenry, in particular the members of Parliament, youth, workers and peasants, formed an impenetrable barrier against an attempt to foment a constitutional collapse and provided support for the resistance to this attack on democracy.

As a result of the crisis of March 1999, the gravity and importance of which caused it to be followed by the media throughout the world, a Government of national unity was established in the framework of the National Constitution. That Government, which I have the honour to represent before this Assembly, is composed of all political parties through democratically elected parliamentarians. Today, it faces the great challenge of pulling Paraguay out of chronic economic stagnation and great social inequity.

In various international forums, and yet again in this arena of brotherhood among the States of the world, Paraguay appeals for the solidarity and cooperation of the multilateral and bilateral organizations in carrying out its economic reactivation programme and the implementation of social and anti-poverty policies. This activity will be the basis and guarantee of the survival of our democracy.

In this context, for the first time in my country's recent history, the political parties, the authorities of the State and the representatives of civil society have agreed in a patriotic consensus on policies and strategies to rechannel economic growth, alleviate poverty, combat social exclusion and achieve well-being for our people. Democracy, as an ideal form of organization and coexistence, will be insured for history by sustainable development, which will guarantee the material well-being of the impoverished majority.

In this respect, my country has subscribed to and fully supports the principles, objectives and measures adopted at the United Nations Conferences on social development, population and development, and women. We are unswervingly committed to political democracy because we know that we must consolidate it with justice, social equity, economic growth and sustainable development. My Government is firmly decided to participate and act jointly with other countries of the world at all levels to enhance natural resources and preserve the environment as an irreplaceable framework for human development.

In a significant response to the requirements of the Cairo Conference, Paraguay has adopted a national plan and a Council for Reproductive Health. With the establishment of the Women's Secretariat, we have strengthened women's presence in government and made available a programme for women's equality in education. This measure has allowed us to incorporate gender equality into educational reform and to adopt a women's equal-opportunity plan.

We have attributed equal importance to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the commitments made at the Children's Summit. In this respect, the Executive Power has submitted a code for minor's for parliamentary approval.

Clearly, these important steps have had a positive effect. Paraguay today, according to the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme, is in a comparatively improved position that favours its human development indicators.

The dynamic of today's world is an unavoidable challenge demanding not only domestic democratic cooperation, but also negotiations that will raise countries to a level of development at which they can work with other regional and multilateral partners.

Convinced of this, Paraguay, freely and in full sovereignty, has decided to join the great Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) project, a regional experiment that has proved to be a useful instrument for addressing the challenges of an ever-changing world economy. Thus, we look forward to the opening of negotiations to establish a free-trade zone between MERCOSUR and the European Union. Similarly, Paraguay is actively participating in the ambitious Free Trade Area of the Americas, an undertaking that will have enormous repercussions for the American continent.

In its decisive struggle for comprehensive progress, my country is participating with renewed hope and great faith in the ideals that formed the basis for the establishment and existence of the United Nations. We therefore reaffirm our full commitment to the principles of multilateralism, equal sovereignty of States and respect for the legal order that support the essential principles of the Organization.

In this respect, Paraguay is examining the process of change and the strengthening of this Organization. We will support all efforts to improve its efficiency and operational capacity to maintain peace and contribute to the human development of all peoples.

Nevertheless, my country believes that the structure of the United Nations must be made less costly and more efficient. The Organization should strengthen the Economic and Social Council, continue to streamline the Secretariat and reduce the overlap of its specialized agencies, through efficient rationalization of the flow of resources for cooperation for sustainable development.

Given the challenges facing the United Nations, we attach considerable importance to the adoption of measures to ensure the good financial functioning of its organs, and we therefore urge Member States, particularly the most developed, to meet their financial obligations as an essential prerequisite for the reform of the Organization.

Similarly, the Government of my country does not consider that the present composition of the Security Council reflects the presence of all the main actors of the international community, nor that its numbers are in proportion to the totality of Members. Only an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent Members will ensure more equitable participation within the Security Council and, thus the necessary political balance. In that respect, the progressive process of international democratization must conclude with the elimination of the right of veto of its permanent members.

Therefore, Paraguay supports the aspiration of Latin America and other continents to have greater representation in the Council, where the presence of Brazil as a permanent member, could represent the great interests of our region.

Paraguay is convinced that maintaining international peace and security must continue to be one of the priorities of the United Nations, in particular in those areas of conflict where its intervention can contribute decisively to stabilizing the situation on the ground and achieving peace.

As proof of its commitment to these noble purposes, the Government of Paraguay has officially offered the Secretary-General the participation of members of its armed forces in United Nations peacekeeping operations, a decision which will contribute to this noble humanitarian purpose. To that end, a battalion of elite officers of the Paraguay army is receiving special training to participate in those operations, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding to be signed between the Republic of Paraguay and the United Nations.

However, we truly believe that the best guarantee of peace, together with the monitoring of human rights and equal opportunity for development, is to reduce armaments progressively and in a sustained manner until they are totally eliminated.

Paraguay strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms, regarding it as one of the most serious threats to our societies. In that respect, we have supported all the United Nations initiatives to counteract this scourge, making clear our resolve to prevent it, combat it and eliminate it. It is timely to recall that my country has itself suffered from the effects of this terrible scourge; in this very year we have suffered the horrendous assassination of the Vice-President of the Republic, Luis María Argaña. I take this opportunity for the President of the Republic of Paraguay to thank the General Assembly for the tribute which was paid to him. Paraguay will not cease its struggle to eradicate terrorist bands, which are alien to our tradition and our history.

With regard to other scourges which afflict our societies, I must emphasize with great satisfaction the efforts which my country is making in the crusade against illicit drug-trafficking and related crimes, a struggle which is carried out with the greatest cooperation. The twentieth special session of the United Nations, on the question of drugs, held in New York in June 1998, conveyed in its decisions that spirit, which should lead us inexorably to the final destruction of the merchants of death, a victory which will be achieved with the shared responsibility of the nations committed to the crusade.

These purposes will be achieved with the faithful fulfilment of the commitments undertaken with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this respect, my country has followed the recommendations of the United Nations with regard to signing, adhering to and ratifying those commitments, whose purpose it is to strengthen the framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the individual. International legal instruments in this regard form part of the law in the Republic of Paraguay.

For that reason, my Government accepts verification and monitoring by organizations concerned with the protection of human rights, thus complying with the provisions of the covenants which it has ratified, as a commitment of its will to fulfil them. We must note here that Paraguay has just received a visit from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which arrived in the country in response to an invitation by the Government.

With regard to the priorities of justice concerning crimes of international scope, we find it very satisfactory to note a most promising event: the approval in 1998 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to pass judgement on individuals accused of the crimes which most offend the human conscience. Paraguay, being one of the signatories, has submitted this document for parliamentary approval.

Furthermore, Paraguay, whose population includes 15 per cent of foreigners, the majority of whom live in border areas, free of segregation or discrimination, notes with satisfaction that the problem of the Balkans is moving back to its natural ambit, the United Nations Security Council, which must necessarily approve any decision.

Our permanent, determined support for the Conference on Disarmament is one of the pillars of our international policy. Paraguay, which supported the process of decolonization and the autonomy of peoples from the time the United Nations was established, has followed with great concern the events in East Timor. I sincerely hope that with the efforts of the United Nations, the best solution will be found to the problem, with the consecration of the rights of this people, legitimized in the referendum and encouraged by our Organization.

My country has firmly decided to keep to the essential principles of coexistence and civilization; this is a necessary result of its belonging to the international community. Following the principle of universality, Paraguay supports the right of all the peoples of the world to make their voices heard at the United Nations.

Paraguay believes that the situation in the China Strait must be resolved within the framework of international law, non-aggression and peaceful coexistence of nations.

I cannot fail to state here that we share the sorrow of the people of the Republic of China at the catastrophe afflicting its territory. We must all commit ourselves to offering cooperation and help to achieve its full recovery.

In my country there is an unswerving commitment to democracy and the belief that this can be consolidated only through justice, social equity, economic growth and sustainable development. That is why my Government has resolved to participate and act together with other countries in all efforts aimed at preserving natural resources and the environment, an indispensable task for comprehensive development. For the same reasons, in this year when humanity will achieve the surprising figure of six billion inhabitants in the world, we, the Heads of State and Government and political leaders and officials have the historic responsibility to respond to the needs and expectations of this huge world population. But let us not do it with hunger, thirst, wars, terrorism, discrimination, genocide, tyranny and injustice — let us do it with responsibility, with positive actions, and with security for the human person.

On the threshold of the new millennium, Paraguay is prepared to participate in this urgent task of improving human civilization.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luis Ángel González Macchi, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Latvia, Her Excellency Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Vike-Freiberga (Latvia) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, and its President, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. You may be assured, Sir, of my highest respect, and may I extend to you my best wishes for success in your efforts.

This fifty-fourth Assembly, the last before the year 2000, inevitably gives us food for thought. On the one hand, it urges us to turn to the achievements and the major successes of which the United Nations can rightly be proud. On the other hand, it urges us to rise to all the challenges which the new millennium will not fail to put before us. May our debates here help establish peace and security throughout the world, settle conflicts and develop innovative solutions to the problems we will have to face.

The noble ideals which have guided the United Nations over the years have neither become outdated nor lost their relevance. Peace in the world, combating poverty, defending human rights — this is a programme which is still in force and whose goals could not be more clear-cut. It is rather like the struggle of the mythical hero against the Hydra: he cuts off one head and nine

more grow in its place. Nevertheless, we cannot possibly give up the fight and we must not drop our guard, not if the world we wish to build is a civilized one.

(*spoke in English*)

The fifty-fourth General Assembly of the United Nations is being held at a time when the United Nations system has experienced a certain amount of strain and is faced with important challenges. These have given rise to questions about the effectiveness and the very relevance of this body within the contemporary international system. This scepticism ranges from concerns about the capability of the Organization to address regional conflicts and the needs of the developing world, to concerns about budgetary management problems. No doubt there is some basis for each of those concerns. Nevertheless, they should not undermine the fundamental importance of a truly global Organization which over a period of decades has earned respect around the world. Our ranks are constantly growing, and the United Nations continues to approach the goal of truly worldwide representation.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga upon their admission to United Nations membership.

The reform process of the United Nations is under way, and my country, Latvia, fully supports it. After all, Member States are the ones that set the agenda of the Organization, and it will be the quality and commitment of each State that will ultimately determine the success or failure of our common efforts.

Some of the negative feelings about the United Nations stem from excessive expectations. One cannot view the United Nations as a panacea, particularly where decisions on long-lasting regional problems are concerned or when preventive actions on a regional level are long overdue. Yet even in those situations a modern United Nations system is expected to seek earlier and more effective involvement than was the case in South-East Europe, East Timor or the Middle East. It must be stressed that the painful refugee crisis of Kosovo could not possibly be resolved without the direct involvement of the United Nations and its institutions. But, sadly, the maximum potential of the United Nations cannot always be utilized because of prejudice, lack of political will or perceived political ambitions. Let us not forget that the costs of our reluctance to take action are extremely high: too often our reluctance results in the deaths of innocent people and is the cause of wholesale destruction which may take years and decades to remedy.

The topical issues of cooperation, conflict prevention, non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, humanitarian questions, environmental protection, poverty eradication and gender equality need to be addressed on a global scale. Without a doubt, the United Nations and its institutions must play an increasingly important role in resolving these issues. Since the mandate of the United Nations is to serve humanity, the United Nations should observe the principle of universality. The United Nations capacity for conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy is by no means exhausted and further attention should be paid to fostering the observance of these preventive principles throughout the world.

Even as we speak here today, many people in this world are suffering at the hands of terrorists or live under terrorist threat. Any instances of terrorism should be universally condemned, and steps must be taken to strengthen the international response to this problem.

For the United Nations to become a truly modern Organization, it must reflect the new realities of a changed international context. Reform of the Security Council remains central to the revitalization programme of the United Nations and should reflect both the needs of the international community and present-day realities. The acquisition or possession of nuclear weapons must no longer be the basis for super-Power status, and the future model of the Council will have to reflect this reality. That model should also make the Council more open to the views and contributions of smaller States and non-permanent members.

How does Latvia see its contribution to the new United Nations? My country is one of those nations that could not be a part of the United Nations at its inception; because freedom of choice was forbidden our people when Latvia lost its independence in 1940, we have special respect for this principle today. We also reserve a special place in our hearts for the United Nations because it was the first international Organization which we joined after the restoration of independence in 1991. It was a moment of celebration, pride and even euphoria as justice prevailed and a long struggle to join the community of nations finally came to an end.

But our people quickly realized that we were now setting out along a new road. After a 50-year delay,

Latvia was faced with the task of becoming an equal, responsible and contributing member of a new Europe and a new, globalized international community.

Membership in the United Nations was just the first step along that road towards reasserting our national and our human rights. More importantly, we recognized our responsibility to help other nations setting out on this path.

Yet, even at the very end of this century, we still encounter thinking which a priori denies the right of nations to choose their own destiny. Thankfully, such views are becoming less and less acceptable as the years go by. For Latvia, as a free and sovereign nation, the last few years have been a remarkably successful period of active integration into the international community, of internal restructuring, of wide-ranging reforms and societal regeneration. Fifty years of occupation have left us with a heavy social, economic and psychological legacy, but we have made tremendous efforts to overcome this in every way. The support offered by the United Nations in this onerous task has been of enormous significance and I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate the heartfelt appreciation of Latvia for the invaluable assistance provided by the United Nations.

During this century Latvia has made a remarkable turnaround. It has gone from the depths of tragedy to the heights of success. In a few short years, Latvia has grown into a politically stable State with strong democratic institutions and practices. Latvia has restored a thriving market economy and a deep respect for individual rights and freedoms. Over the past few years and with the help of the international community, Latvia has attached particular importance to the process of forming a fully integrated, harmonious society. It is a challenging but critically important task for my country, the more so because of the burdens imposed by our historical legacy. We perceive it as an ongoing process that involves many cultural and educational aspects and includes the important element of the individual's right to choose. Our goal is to give each resident of our country an equal opportunity to contribute to a civic identity that shares common goals and values with all Europe. As part of this programme, my country will continue to attach particular importance to strengthening the role of the Latvian language and incorporating minorities into the everyday affairs of the country.

Latvia believes in complementarity between regional and global efforts. For Latvia, integration into Europe remains a high priority but it is not the end of the road. Integration into the transatlantic security alliance would be a prudent step but not a sufficient one. For Latvia to succeed, and for the people of Latvia to have the full opportunity they deserve to live secure, healthy and prosperous lives, Latvia must be integrated into the political, business and intellectual exchange of the global community.

We are very proud that on 10 February 1999 Latvia became the first Baltic State to join the World Trade Organization as a full-fledged member.

Within the range of its capabilities, Latvia has participated in peace operations in the Balkans and has contributed to relieving the suffering of Kosovo refugees.

Latvia has been an active contributor to United Nations revitalization through its membership in the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

Latvia has put forward its candidature for the Security Council elections in 2005. This spring my country signed the Statute of the International Criminal Court and is currently planning the ratification process.

A very visible indication of our appreciation of the work of the United Nations and a concrete manifestation of Latvia's support for the Secretary General's programme for United Nations reform is our donation of a historic, fully renovated building in the centre of our capital as a shared home for all United Nations agencies in Latvia. On 16 July this year, and as one of my first official functions as President, I had the pleasure of participating in the official inauguration of the United Nations House in Riga, one of the first United Nations Houses in Europe and the very first in our region.

I should like to express my country's full support for the proposed Millennium Assembly of 2000 and trust that it will become a landmark in setting our sights for the twenty-first century.

May the results of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly advance our common cause at the dawn of the new millennium.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Joschka Fischer.

Mr. Fischer (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in this difficult office.

I should also like to thank Foreign Minister Opertti for his tireless dedication in successfully presiding over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

I welcome Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga, with which Germany has long enjoyed friendly ties, as new Members of the world Organization.

I endorse the statement of my Finnish colleague, Tarja Halonen, on behalf of the European Union.

This session of the General Assembly is the last in this "century of extremes", as the British historian Eric Hobsbawm called the century now drawing to a close. That is reason enough to take stock. Since its foundation, the United Nations has greatly enhanced relations between peoples. The development of international law, protection of human rights, decolonization, worldwide humanitarian and disaster aid, arousing awareness of the great problems facing mankind, such as population growth, poverty and the global environmental crisis — all of this would be inconceivable without the United Nations.

There is no alternative to the United Nations objectives and values — peace, human rights, freedom, justice and development — and they have gained worldwide recognition, even if, unfortunately, they are not always respected everywhere. Nevertheless, even after more than 50 years, there is still a long way to go before they are universally respected and implemented. Despite all its efforts, the international community has not yet succeeded in ridding our planet of war, oppression, tyranny, expulsion and grave human rights violations, including genocide. At the close of this century, the United Nations and its Member States are unable to fully master their core task, namely, safeguarding peace and security. The great hope that following the end of the East-West conflict the era of multilateral cooperation and worldwide rule of law would dawn has not yet come to fruition.

Today the question of peacekeeping must be considered under conditions very different to those during the United Nations early years. First, most conflicts today are internal rather than international, as in earlier times. Secondly, the role of the nation State has been considerably relativized by the increased importance of human rights and the globalization of the economy and society. Against this background, the question of peacekeeping arises more and more in an area of tension between traditional State sovereignty and protection of human rights.

What is to be done when entire States collapse and the civilian population is massacred in never-ending civil wars from all sides? What if ethnic tensions in a State are partly provoked by criminal Governments, which then respond with pogroms, mass expulsions and mass murders, even genocide? Should the United Nations then regard State sovereignty as more important than protection of individuals and their rights? Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor are dramatic examples of this.

In many ways, therefore, the Kosovo conflict represents a turning point. The international community could no longer tolerate a State waging war against its own people and using terror and expulsion as a political instrument. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his brilliant and trail-blazing speech to the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, no Government has the right to use the cover of the principle of State sovereignty to violate human rights. Non-interference in internal affairs must no longer be misused as a shield for dictators and murderers. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna reaffirmed this in 1993, with the approval of all United Nations Members States, with the words:

> "the promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community". (*Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, I, para. 4*)

However, the Kosovo conflict also marks a change of direction in the development of international relations. How will the international community decide in the

future — this question has just been raised once more in East Timor — when it comes to preventing massive human rights violations against an entire people? Two developments are conceivable.

A practice of humanitarian interventions could evolve outside the United Nations system. This would be a very problematic development. The intervention in Kosovo, which took place in a situation where the Security Council had tied its own hands after all efforts to find a peaceful solution had failed, was intended to provide emergency assistance and, ultimately, to protect the displaced Kosovo Albanians. The unity of the European States and the Western Alliance, as well as various Security Council resolutions, were of crucial significance here. However, this step, which is only justified in this special situation, must not set a precedent for weakening the United Nations Security Council's monopoly on authorizing the use of legal international force. Nor must it become a licence to use external force under the pretext of humanitarian assistance. This would open the door to the arbitrary use of power and anarchy and throw the world back to the nineteenth century.

The only solution to this dilemma, therefore, is to further develop the existing United Nations system in such a way that in the future it is able to intervene in good time in cases of very grave human rights violations, but not until all means of settling conflicts peacefully have been exhausted and — this is a crucial point — within a strictly limited legal and controlled framework.

In the twenty-first century the individual and his rights must take a more prominent place alongside the rights of States in the concept of security as defined by the international community. The reform of the Security Council, the central body for safeguarding world peace, must be oriented towards this principle. The Security Council is, in fact, authorized to act, and able to do so, where peace or security are at risk due to internal developments. This has been demonstrated by a long chain of decisions, from the apartheid resolution to the interventions in Iraq, Bosnia and Haiti. However, in Rwanda, Kosovo and the Congo, decision making in the Security Council was blocked, thus rendering it unable to live up to its responsibilities enshrined in the United Nations Charter, with disastrous results for the peoples in question.

These conflicts are a pressing reason, particularly in view of the important Millennium General Assembly, to finally carry out the long-overdue substantial reform of the Security Council. The Security Council must be adapted to the new realities of the global political situation. It must have a more representative composition and, above all, it must be equipped to react to the crises and conflicts of today. Reform must involve enlargement to include both more permanent and non-permanent members, as well as a strengthening of its decision-making powers. As the Assembly knows, Germany has for some time now expressed its willingness to assume more and lasting responsibility in this connection. We stand by this unreservedly.

In the debate on reform we must not avoid the issue of the permanent members' right of veto, a question of key importance for the Security Council's capability to act. The right of veto is regarded by many as outdated in its current form. However, it is a situation with which we have to reckon internationally for a long time to come. How then can decision-making in the Security Council be made more efficient?

According to the Charter, the Security Council acts with the mandate, and on behalf, of all United Nations Member States. But hitherto they have not been entitled to learn why a State has exercised its right of veto. This is not only neither democratic nor transparent, but also makes it easier for States to veto a draft resolution unilaterally for national rather than international interests. The introduction of an obligation for a State to explain to the General Assembly why it is vetoing a draft resolution would make it more difficult to do so and thus bring about substantial progress towards using the right of veto more responsibly. Why should not the General Assembly assume more responsibility in the future, too?

A second approach to making the international peacekeeping system more efficient would be via Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, namely by strengthening the regional security systems and redistributing tasks and areas of responsibility among them and the United Nations. It is becoming clear that the regional organizations could be allocated an even greater implementation role. This would also foster the capabilities of regional organizations to engage in security cooperation, as well as their collaboration with the United Nations. However, the primacy of the Security Council remains absolutely essential.

Without reforms in the area of peacekeeping, the Security Council will be circumvented more and more frequently, resulting in the erosion of the Security Council and, ultimately, of the entire United Nations

system. The United Nations, one of civilization's greatest achievements this century, as well as the values and principles it represents, would thus be at risk of subsiding into insignificance. We must prevent that.

The disaster in East Timor is currently demonstrating how necessary close cooperation is between a Security Council capable of taking action and the countries in the region. The Security Council's mandate to send a multilateral peacekeeping force must be fully implemented. Indonesia must now cooperate closely with the United Nations Mission and do everything in its power to guarantee its success. The bloodshed must end. The victims must be helped. Those displaced must be able to return home safely. Germany has already provided humanitarian and food aid. We will send a medical corps to assist the peacekeeping troops and make further contributions towards rebuilding the destroyed country. I am confident that our Parliament will lend this plan its full backing.

In Africa, the Great Lakes region, the Congo and Sierra Leone have for many years been the scene of terrible wars, mass murders, destruction and much suffering on the part of refugees. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) have done much to contain and resolve these conflicts. However, these organizations also need the support of the United Nations, in Sierra Leone, in the Congo and, in particular, in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Both parties to the conflict must observe the agreements concluded and work closely together with the United Nations and the OAU so that the peace process now begun can be brought to a successful conclusion.

The international community must focus on the causes rather than merely the symptoms of wars and conflicts in the context of multilateral peacekeeping. Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly called for a "culture of prevention" to be developed in order to prevent the outbreak of wars and avert natural disasters more effectively in future.

Everyone knows how difficult the transition from the "culture of reaction" to the "culture of prevention" will be. It takes a lot of persuading to summon up the political and economic will for measures intended to prevent something which we hope will never happen. However, on financial grounds and, above all, on humanitarian grounds, it is our duty and responsibility to revise our thinking here. Progress is urgently required in four areas.

First, we must move on from early warning to early response. The United Nations has considerable resources at its disposal for preventive diplomacy, which must be used even more. There is also a great potential for synergy in cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations must be carried out before conflicts erupt. The United Nations mission in Macedonia has set a standard in this respect.

Thirdly, disarmament and the non-proliferation of means of mass destruction are in need of fresh political impetus. It is essential that the Geneva negotiations gain momentum, particularly in the fields of global nuclear disarmament and the verification of biological weapons, and in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, Germany advocates the adoption of a convention on preventing the illegal transfer of small arms worldwide.

Fourthly, peace-building is a prevention task of growing importance. With the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations is facing one of the most comprehensive tests in its history. Building public order by creating an efficient judicial system and quickly sending the pledged international police units is now crucial. Since the United Nations began incorporating national police units in the international standby system, they have been able to act more swiftly. We must continue along this path.

Protection of human rights and the growing democratization of States form the basis for a preventive peace policy and civil conflict management. It is a historical fact that democracies with a well-developed civil society hardly ever wage war against each other. Lasting economic success cannot be achieved in the globalized information society of tomorrow without good governance founded on human rights, the separation of powers and a functioning legal and constitutional framework.

In the field of human rights, welcome progress has been made towards broadening the legal basis for international relations, particularly during the last year. The detention of Pinochet and the indictment of Milosevic by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are milestones along the path towards creating a world in which the rule of law prevails. In future, dictators and perpetrators of human rights violations will no longer be able to rely on not being

called to account for their actions. This must also apply to the murderers of Dili and those who issued the orders. Just like everywhere else in the world, internal peace is contingent upon justice.

The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court represented a quantum leap in the development of international law. I call upon all States to respect the integrity of the Rome Statute, to sign it and to swiftly ratify it, so that the Court can commence work next year.

Germany is doing all it can to bring about progress in the following fields of human rights. The heinous crimes of child trafficking and child prostitution must be banned throughout the world, as must the use of child soldiers. In the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, the age limit must be raised to 18.

In many countries women are still largely without rights and protection and subjected to discrimination and violence. This is an unacceptable injustice. Unfortunately, our world is still a long way from genuine equality, even with regard to fundamental rights. We must therefore aim to adopt the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In our view, the death penalty cannot be justified either ethically or legally. Together with its European partners, Germany will therefore continue to vigorously work towards ensuring the implementation of the joint resolution on abolishing the death penalty.

Protection of press freedom must be improved. The freedom to inform is a reliable gauge of respect for human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right to freedom of opinion. However, censorship, intimidation and reprisals are the order of the day in many countries. It is particularly shocking that year after year dozens of journalists are killed while on assignment. The United Nations should take a closer look at this issue and consider practical solutions as well as enhance legal protection for journalists. To this end we will shortly be extending invitations to a conference to be held in Germany.

The United Nations third major task alongside peacekeeping and promoting human rights in the coming century will be to bring about a reconciliation between rich and poor countries.

The tenth *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme came to the sad conclusion that globalization has further widened the gap between rich and poor countries. The international community must endeavour to counter this trend. The development of the poorer and the poorest countries must not be left to the invisible hand of the global market. The individual, not the market, must be the focus of the globalization debate. This will also require greater steering at the political level.

The rich countries have a responsibility to help poor countries take advantage of globalization and enable them to have a fairer share of the world economy by assisting them with internal reforms and by opening up markets. Within the framework of its European Union and Group of 8 presidencies, Germany launched substantial initiatives, which must be further developed in the form of the 1999 Köln Debt Initiative and the commencement of negotiations on a follow-up arrangement for the Lomé Convention.

Development cooperation in the broadest sense must become one of the United Nations core tasks to a greater degree than hitherto. Science and technology are geared far too much to the problems of rich countries. Why do we not make greater use of the United Nations framework to build bridges here? The economist Jeffrey Sachs made the interesting suggestion, for example, that a millennium vaccine fund could be established, with guaranteed markets in the future for vaccines against tropical viruses such as tuberculosis, malaria and, above all, AIDS. Furthermore, in the context of the emergence of a global knowledge society, the international regime for the protection of intellectual property must be revised in order to ensure that the world's poor do not lose a large part of their rights and freedoms in the near future. Rich and poor countries should get together with one another more frequently to discuss such proposals. During its presidency of the Group of Eight, Germany made a start by meeting the non-aligned countries and the Group of 77.

The destruction of the environment has long since ceased to be a soft issue, but, rather, has become a very hard question which will have an increasingly strong impact on international security. According to the new study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), global warming and water shortages will be the biggest problems facing humanity in the coming century. UNEP also rightly draws attention to the close connection between environmental destruction, poverty and excessive

consumption. The deadlock in the climate protection negotiations must finally be overcome and the Kyoto Protocol implemented. The destruction of the rain forest must be stopped and further desertification prevented, and we must halt the squandering of our planet's natural resources and switch to renewable energy as quickly as possible. The world does not have much time left to remap a course towards sustainability. This will also require a much more active population policy, including a long-term strategy to deal with the ageing of our world's population. The International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted in 1982, is in need of urgent revision. We intend to hold a ministerial conference in Germany on this issue under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe.

With the leap into the next millennium, the nation State principle will continue to diminish in importance. It will no longer be possible to find answers to major global problems within the framework of the traditional nation state. Rather, this will take place in a strengthened international structure and with a transfer of power to international organizations, with the United Nations at their head. This will entail a transformation of traditional power into justice, the reconciliation of interests and a greater role for civil society in the international political system, with the ever-greater involvement of representatives of civil society and industry. Reaching agreement on minimum standards with regard to social issues — on the issue of child labour, for example — will be possible in many cases only in a global context. I support the proposal put forward by Secretary-General Kofi Annan that a global pact on common values and principles be concluded within the framework of a public/private partnership, between the United Nations and major companies, in order to lend the law of the market a human face.

The United Nations must become the core of effective global governance. Strengthening the United Nations, which must begin by guaranteeing its financial basis, is therefore one of Germany's most important foreign policy objectives.

During the past 50 years, and for the first time in its history, Germany has been opting wholeheartedly for integration into multilateral structures, thereby achieving democracy, freedom and reunification. Today, out of a sense of deep conviction and historical responsibility, our country is committed to peaceful reconciliation of interests and to multilateralism. We are taking this conviction with us to our old and new capital, Berlin. In the international State system of tomorrow the answer to the challenges of globalization will come from multilateralism alone. Our world will always be plural, and no form of unilateralism can therefore work in the long run. For that reason, the twenty-first century, with its more than 6 billion people and their States, will need a United Nations that is capable of taking action. The United Nations and its Members can therefore be certain that we Germans will be their staunchest allies in the efforts to strengthen the United Nations.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, on whom I now call.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I am confident that with your wisdom and experience, you will be able to accomplish your lofty mission successfully. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Opertti for the contribution he made as President of the General Assembly at its previous session. I also wish to take this opportunity to extend my sincere congratulations to the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga on their admission to the membership of the United Nations.

The current session of the General Assembly is of special significance, as it is the last one of this century. A review of the past may help us predict the future. In retrospect, during the past century humanity, on the one hand, created unprecedented material wealth and culture and, on the other, suffered from the scourge of two world wars and the ordeal of the cold war, which lasted for almost 50 years. Since the end of the cold war, the world has been moving towards multipolarity and the overall international situation has started to relax. The maintenance of peace, the pursuit of stability and the promotion of development have become the common aspiration and demand of the people of all countries. Nevertheless, the harsh reality suggests that the world is far from tranquil. The cold-war mentality still lingers on. Hegemonism and power politics have manifested themselves in new expressions. Military blocs are being expanded and reinforced, and there is an increasing tendency towards military intervention. Triggered by ethnic, religious and territorial issues, regional conflicts and disputes continue to emerge one after another. The conflict between the North and the South has become ever more acute. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. World peace is still elusive, and development faces even more serious challenges.

Hegemonism and power politics are the root causes of the turmoil in today's world. The outbreak of war in Kosovo sounded a resounding alarm. A regional military organization, in the name of humanitarianism and human rights, bypassed the United Nations to take large-scale military actions against a sovereign State, thus creating an ominous precedent in international relations. This act was a violation of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized norms governing international relations. It has eroded the leading role of the United Nations in safeguarding world peace and security and gravely undermined the authority of the United Nations Security Council. During that war, the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was bombed, which caused heavy casualties and much loss of property. It was an incident such as has rarely been seen in diplomatic history, and naturally roused the utmost indignation of the entire Chinese people and the strong condemnation of the international community.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has held a clear and consistent position on the issue of Kosovo. We seek no selfish interests and are only upholding justice. For the sake of peace, we maintain that the Kosovo issue should be resolved through peaceful negotiations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and with guarantees of the legitimate rights and interest of all ethnic groups in Kosovo. We are opposed to the use of force under any pretext.

Mankind is on the threshold of the twenty-first century. Where should the world go? What kind of new international political and economic order should be established? These are urgent questions facing the Governments and the peoples of all countries.

The world is undergoing significant and profound changes. A changed world calls for a corresponding new international political and economic order. World peace and development demand the establishment of a just and reasonable new international order, which is the common aspiration of the international community. It should be based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized principles governing international relations. In this connection, I wish to highlight the following points.

The first relates to sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. Such arguments as human rights taking precedence over sovereignty and humanitarian intervention seem to be in vogue these days. Some countries have even put such arguments into practice. We believe that it is the sacred duty of all Governments to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and that all countries have an obligation to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their own peoples in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international human rights instruments, and in the light of their respective national conditions and relevant laws. But as political systems, levels of economic development, history, cultural background and values vary from country to country, it is only natural that countries should have different interpretations and even diverging views on human rights. Countries should engage in dialogue and exchanges on the basis of equality and mutual respect so as to better understand each other, expand common ground and handle their differences properly, rather than resort to confrontation or interference in the internal affairs of others under the pretext of human rights.

The issue of human rights is, in essence, the internal affair of a given country, and should be addressed mainly by the Government of that country through its own efforts. Ours is a diversified world. Each country has the right to choose its own social system, approach to development and values that are suited to its national conditions. The history of China and other developing countries shows that a country's sovereignty is the prerequisite for and the basis of the human rights that the people of that country can enjoy. When the sovereignty of a country is put in jeopardy, its human rights can hardly be protected effectively. Sovereign equality, mutual respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others are the basic principles governing international relations today. In spite of the major changes in the post-cold-war international situation, these principles are by no means out of date. Any deviation from or violation of these principles would destroy the universally recognized norms governing international relations, and would lead to the rule of hegemonism; if the notion of "might is right" should prevail, a new gun-boat policy would wreak havoc, the sovereignty and independence by virtue of which some small and weak countries protect themselves would be jeopardized and international peace and stability would be seriously endangered.

The Kosovo crisis has proved that to engage in so-called humanitarian intervention in a sovereign State with neither a mandate from the Security Council nor the prior

consent of the country concerned will cause a greater humanitarian catastrophe instead of resolving the problem. In view of this, under the current circumstances, the principles of respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others must be effectively strengthened rather than weakened in order to maintain world peace and stability.

The second principle is the pacific settlement of international disputes. This principle, initiated by the Hague peace conference 100 years ago, is now an important principle of the United Nations Charter and a basic principle of contemporary international law. History shows that deviation from this principle over the past century has led to, "the scourge of war, which twice ... has brought untold sorrow to mankind", and to foreign aggression, which has inflicted tremendous suffering on the peoples of a number of countries. In the current international situation, adherence to the principle of the pacific settlement of international disputes is still highly relevant to the contemporary world.

The pacific settlement of international disputes is predicated on the non-use and non-threat of force in international relations. We maintain that handling State-to-State relations with the mentality and modalities of "hot" wars, cold wars, power politics or bloc politics will get nowhere. All international disputes and regional conflicts should be resolved in a fair and reasonable manner through peaceful negotiation and consultation on the basis of equality, rather than through the arbitrary use or threat of force based on the power of military superiority. Only in this way can fundamental solutions to disputes or conflicts be found without complicating or aggravating them or leaving behind a hidden peril. And only in this way can States coexist in harmony and achieve common development. This is the only way to lasting peace and stability in the world. Otherwise, the world will never be a tranquil place.

The third principle relates to strengthening the role of the United Nations and preserving the authority of the Security Council. The role of the United Nations is indispensable for the achievement of genuine peace and development and for the establishment of a just and reasonable new international order. Strengthening the role of the United Nations is in line with the historical trend; it meets the needs of the times and conforms to the shared aspiration of all the world's peoples. In order to strengthen the role of the United Nations, efforts should first be made to uphold the sanctity of the purposes and principles of the Charter. The most important reason why the United Nations has been able to grow from 51 founding Members to its current size is that it has acted according to these purposes and principles. Those purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations have already taken deep root in international practice and form a legal basis on which peaceful and friendly relations between countries are guided. It is the view of the Chinese Government that despite the great changes that have taken place in the international situation, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are still relevant. We are opposed to any irresponsible interpretation or revision of them, with whatever excuse.

If the United Nations role is to be strengthened, the authority of the Security Council must be preserved. According to the provisions of the Charter, the Security Council shoulders primary responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security. It has been proved that the role of the Security Council is irreplaceable. Given the current circumstances, it is imperative to preserve its authority and leading role. Any act to weaken this authority or to impose the will of an individual country or a group of countries on the Security Council is very dangerous. Instead of contributing to the maintenance of peace, it will further breed power politics and hegemonism and will give rise to endless troubles.

If the United Nations role is to be strengthened, it is essential to ensure that all Member States have the right to equal participation in international affairs, so that their reasonable propositions will be fully reflected and their legitimate rights and interests protected by the United Nations. Decisions adopted by the United Nations must give expression to the common will of the majority of its Member States. Any attempt by a few countries or a group of countries to monopolize world affairs and decide the destiny of the people of other countries goes against the trend of the times and will never succeed.

Fourthly, we must foster a new security concept and safeguard international security. The old security concept is based on military alliance and arms build-up and does not help safeguard international security, still less build a lasting peace in the world. In today's world it is necessary to foster a new security concept that satisfies the needs of the times and to explore new ways of maintaining peace and security. The core of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the purposes of the United Nations Charter are the political foundation for the maintenance of international security, while mutually beneficial

cooperation and common development constitute its economic guarantee. Dialogue on an equal footing, full consultation and peaceful negotiations are the right way to maintain international security.

Relaxation in the international situation and the disarmament process are complementary to each other. It is regrettable, however, that some recent negative developments in the international situation have seriously hindered the healthy development of the disarmament process. How to promote the disarmament process, prevent an arms race and safeguard international security have become pressing concerns for the international community. We are opposed to any attempt, on the basis of excuses that are not genuine, to seek military strength that goes beyond a country's legitimate defence needs. We are also opposed to any attempt to restrict and weaken other countries in the name of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to seek absolute, unilateral security supremacy for one country or group of countries. We call on the international community to take the new security concept as a guideline and wholeheartedly promote the healthy development of the disarmament process, in the interest of world peace and security.

Fifthly, we must reform the international economic system and promote the common development of all countries. The old and irrational economic order has seriously impeded the sound development of the world economy, further widening the wealth gap between the North and the South. The East Asian financial crisis that broke out two years ago has affected many countries in the world. To prevent financial risks and ensure economic security has become an urgent task facing many countries, especially the developing countries. The world economy is an interrelated and indivisible whole. All members of the international community should take a responsible approach and, in a spirit of risk sharing, strengthen their cooperation and jointly promote a steady growth of the world economy.

Therefore, it is necessary to reform the current international economic and financial systems. The United Nations and the international financial institutions should earnestly construct a framework to prevent and overcome financial and other economic risks. Accordingly, the developed countries should take on more obligations. The developing countries have the right to equal participation in world economic decision-making and the formulation of relevant rules. In the new round of negotiations that will soon begin in the World Trade Organization, the reasonable demands of developing countries should be fully reflected. Cooperation should be strengthened on the basis of mutual benefit. No country should prejudice other countries' economic security and development by virtue of its economic, technological and financial advantages. We should all oppose trade discrimination, the rich bullying the poor and the arbitrary resort to economic sanctions or the threat of sanctions against other countries. The developed and developing countries both have their own advantages and should learn from each other to make up for their deficiencies so as to achieve common sustainable development.

Moreover, on such global issues as the environment, population, poverty and debt the developed countries should not shirk their responsibility and obligation; rather, they should take the lead in providing technological and financial assistance to the developing countries. We deem it necessary for the United Nations to hold a special conference at an appropriate time to discuss the globalization of the world economy, in order to promote international cooperation in this field and to achieve common prosperity.

The People's Republic of China will soon celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. For half a century, especially in the last 21 years of reform and opening-up, earth-shaking changes have taken place in China, and the Chinese people have scored tremendous achievements in socialist economic, political and cultural development as well as in diplomatic and other endeavours. Following Hong Kong's return to the motherland the year before last, the Chinese Government will soon resume the exercise of sovereignty over Macao. At present, China enjoys political stability, sustained economic growth, national unity, social tranquillity and progress. Although difficulties and serious challenges still lie ahead, we are confident and capable of overcoming the difficulties, rising to the challenges and forging ahead with every aspect of the socialist cause of building a strong, prosperous, democratic and culturally advanced country.

In the face of international vicissitudes, the Chinese Government will steadfastly take up economic development as the central task, resolutely press ahead with reform and opening up, consistently maintain social stability and unswervingly pursue an independent foreign policy of peace. We are willing to continue to develop friendly relations and cooperation on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence with all other countries in the world and to make our due contribution to safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.

The Chinese Government and people will, as always, resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and will continue to advance the great cause of national reunification. It is a fact universally recognized by the international community that there is only one China in the world, that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory and that the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government representing the whole of China. China's territory and sovereignty are absolutely indivisible. The ultimate reunification of the motherland represents the common aspiration and firm resolve of all the Chinese people, including our compatriots on Taiwan. No force can hold us back in this great cause.

The Chinese Government will continue to adhere to its established policy for settling the question of Taiwan. We are firmly opposed to any efforts to create "independence for Taiwan", "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan". All moves to divide the motherland are doomed to failure. China's great cause of national reunification can and will be accomplished.

A few days ago a powerful earthquake shook China's province of Taiwan. This earthquake caused heavy loss of life and property damage for our compatriots in Taiwan. We are extremely concerned about this catastrophe and express our sympathy to our compatriots on the island. We also express our condolences to the families of the victims of the earthquake. People on both sides of the strait are brothers and sisters in one big family. The disaster that hit Taiwan and the pains of our compatriots on the island are shared by the entire Chinese people. We will provide every possible support and assistance to alleviate the harm caused by the earthquake.

I take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly and the international community as a whole for their sympathy, condolences and assistance.

The twenty-first century is dawning. The future of the world is bright, and the new century is bound to be a more splendid one than this. The Chinese people stand ready to work with the people of other countries for the establishment of a just and rational new international order, for peace and development in the new century, and for the overall progress of human society.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly; it is a sure guarantee of success for the fifty-fourth session. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Didier Opertti, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, for his exemplary management of the Assembly's work during the past year.

On the many issues facing the General Assembly in the year to come, Italy shares and supports the statement made yesterday by the Foreign Minister of Finland speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The last few years of this century have disproved the notion that people and human freedoms take second place to State sovereignty. In Kosovo and East Timor a coalition of States resorted to the use of force, but not for self-seeking national interests, not to defend their borders, not to impose new hegemonies.

The end of the nuclear nightmare has coincided with a rampant proliferation of local conflicts, terrorist acts and traumatic economic and financial crises. Can the end of communism have given peace to former cold-war enemies and conflict to the rest of the world? The cold war brought a precarious, imperfect peace. Was that preferable to the tragic series of conflicts that have embroiled humanity over the past 10 years? The division of Europe helped neutralize tensions throughout the planet. Does this mean that nuclear weapons brought about a period of unprecedented stability, and — as some have suggested, paradoxically — that we should award the Nobel Peace Prize to the bomb? The breakdown of the former international order has created a plethora of new States. Does this mean that dividing the world in two was the only way to grant common citizenship to peoples and religious groups that have never learned the art of peaceful coexistence? The international community now takes military action to deal with tragedies that only a few years ago would have left us indifferent, and yet we are still influenced by military assessments, strategic interests, regional solidarity, public opinion and the magnitude of any human rights violations. How can we act according to more precise rules, based primarily on the duty of States to protect the rights of individuals?

The crises that have broken out in recent years have raised agonizing dilemmas and difficult questions that demand answers. It would be wrong to use the imperfections of the international system as an excuse for inaction. But it would also be wrong to ignore the new demands for certainty and the rule of law: the greatest

challenge is how to relate authority to law and lay down codes of conduct and political discipline that reconcile power with legitimacy.

Allow me to articulate a set of principles that could guide our action in the new century. First, we should enhance crisis prevention rather than conflict suppression. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has rightly observed that we must eradicate the cultural and economic causes of conflicts and that a culture of conflict prevention must prevail over the culture of conflict suppression. We know what these causes of conflict are: the huge gap between the living standards and incomes of different classes and nations; the exponential increase in mass migration from poor to rich countries; cultural difference and the conflicts and fanaticism it triggers; criminal acts for the sake of glorifying or even creating a nation. These are the four horsemen of the contemporary Apocalypse.

Secondly, we should use force only as a last resort. Arms should be used to stop criminal behaviour only when economic and political instruments are inapplicable or have failed. Ten years ago, these same instruments brought down totalitarian communism, which was a more formidable enemy than today's tyrants. In the Balkans and in East Timor, peacekeeping operations were launched to address serious, massive and systematic violations of human rights. The decisions to intervene were made after repeated demands that the culprits end a state of illegality; after an exhaustive and fruitless search for a diplomatic solution; and by a group of States rather than by a single Power.

We are living in an age of unfinished wars. In Iraq as in Serbia, authoritarian rulers have been seriously weakened, but they are still in power. How and how much can sanctions be used to replace or complement the use of force? Perhaps we need clearer international strategies and rules that pay heed to the most vulnerable members of society, to the political opposition and to the risk of strengthening despots through sanctions. Our focus should be more on incentives than on sanctions.

Thirdly, we need to define rules. No one knows the size or shape of the next challenge. But our response must be dictated by respect for universal principles rather than by a balance of power. We must beware of conjuring up the spectre of international law as the law of the strongest. We must beware of making some countries more equal than others. To do so would run counter to our best political and cultural traditions, in which the law is meant to protect the weak.

The Western world and the Euro-Atlantic institutions are no threat to anyone's integrity, prosperity and freedom. But we must perfect the instruments that uphold the international rule of law. We must spell out the duties of States. We must create a fully fledged corpus of case law on universal human rights. We must work out rules and procedures that will justify the erosion of sovereignty in the name of global responsibility. This is why every country must make it a priority to ratify the international instruments for safeguarding human rights. I am thinking in particular of the International Criminal Court, which was instituted in Rome in June of last year. These instruments should be reflected in our national legislation and practice. Finally, we should encourage the involvement of our own institutions. It is in this spirit that we have invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, to address the Italian Parliament.

Until human rights are firmly institutionalized, doubts will remain over the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness. The gradual construction of universal citizenship is a learning process to which we all should contribute. Otherwise we shall be racing towards fragmentation, seeking forms of independence that are not economically viable and that are vulnerable to others' desire for hegemony.

Fourthly, we must learn to appreciate the judgement of others. I would like to quote, in this respect, one of the founding fathers of American democracy, James Madison. He said:

> "An attention to the judgement of other nations is important to every government for two reasons. The first one is that, independently of the merits of any particular plan or measure, it is desirable, on various accounts, that it should appear to other nations as the offspring of a wise and honourable policy. The second is that, in doubtful cases, particularly where the national councils may be warped by some strong passion or momentary interests, the presumed or known opinion of the impartial world may be the best guides that can be followed."

Today's world has acquired a new sensitivity. It will no longer tolerate the oppression of the weak. This implies a rethinking of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference that have governed the community of nations for over three centuries, beginning in Europe. But we must avoid double standards, applying

one yardstick to friendly countries and another to those that are not. This is what makes the ultimate sanction of the United Nations so indispensable, since an international legal standard cannot — except in exceptional temporary situations — be the prerogative of any single group of States.

When we defend the rights of others, we cannot pretend that the lives of our own people are not also at risk. By the same token, it would be inconsistent not to place the same value on other human lives as we do on our own.

Every culture and tradition must be involved in the defence of liberties and freedom. We cannot ignore the regional dimension of human rights, whose inviolable universal character can be enriched by the varieties of historic experiences. But stalemates and the paralysis of intersecting vetoes must be avoided by anchoring even the strongest States to a system of rules and principles, balancing their power against the effectiveness and strength of the international institutions.

Fifthly, we should strengthen the institutions. The aftermath of the cold war has proved that large political and economic groupings can more easily guarantee ethnic coexistence, religious tolerance and economic advancement. This should be kept in mind whenever pressure builds to release the genie of self-determination from the bottle of State sovereignty.

Only the great institutions, whether regional — such as the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance — or universal — such as the United Nations — can close the gap between democratic codification of laws and their effective enforcement. Unless we have a strong institutional network, every peacekeeping operation could end up looking as if we were taking the law into our own hands. Everyone would feel as if he should look out only for his own security, leading to a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, let us resume the disarmament talks, as President Clinton proposed in his statement yesterday, and place our common security on more solid foundations.

There is one lesson to be learned from these years of turmoil: actions to prevent and repress the most serious violations of human rights may take precedence over respect for national sovereignty. No Government can hide behind the shield of its own borders. Legitimacy demands the redefinition of relations between States and the international community. It demands the reformulation of the principle of non-interference, which has sometimes allowed States to neglect their duties towards their citizens. Although the United Nations is an organization of States, the rights and the ideals it protects are those of individuals.

I have listed some rules that will help redefine coexistence among peoples through the work of the United Nations. We live in a world in which threats against one group immediately affect every other group and impel them to take responsibility, a world in which the concept of non-interference can no longer be invoked to obstruct action in the face of serious violations of fundamental rights. We must ask ourselves how to address all these changes, for the sake of closer and more equitable international cooperation.

Of course, States will continue to have different perceptions of national interests, and there will be a continued need to reconcile them peacefully. But for the United Nations to meet the challenges of the new century, our codes of conduct must be placed within a more solid institutional framework. The United Nations Security Council should be made more representative and democratic in composition, in line with proposals of a number of Member States. All the citizens of the world should be able to identify themselves with the United Nations and feel a part of its decision-making and law-making processes; this for the sake of universal sovereignty, which is not the prerogative of a few, but the right of all.

The cold war represented an international order dominated by two super-Powers and held in check by nuclear weapons. Today's world is economically more united, but politically more divided. The watchword of the economy is deregulation. But politics requires rules if we do not want anarchy to prevail. Unlike the market, in politics no invisible hand can generate peace and prosperity. What we need is a visible hand that enacts rules and regulations, and obliges States to respect them, both beyond their borders and in the treatment of their citizens. Let us make the United Nations the visible hand of peace and prosperity. This may be the greatest challenge awaiting us. We must face it together, here in this forum, and place it at the centre of the upcoming debate on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century.

The President: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I should like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the decision taken by the General

Assembly at its third plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, the list of speakers will be closed today at 6 p.m.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs of San Marino, His Excellency Mr. Gabriele Gatti.

Mr. Gatti (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. You represent a geographical region, the African continent, which can significantly contribute to identifying the major causes of world problems and help to evaluate their effects. You can lead this Organization towards desirable and concrete results.

A particular acknowledgment goes to President Didier Opertti. San Marino had the opportunity and privilege to work in close cooperation with him and to ascertain his undeniable and extraordinary skills and the remarkable accomplishments reached during his mandate.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the three new States which have recently joined the big family of the United Nations. I am deeply convinced that countries never involved in wars possess an inestimable richness and can transmit to the whole world their history of peace and tolerance, helping us reach the goals set forth in the preambular paragraphs of the Charter.

The Republic of San Marino believes that the United Nations is, and must remain, the forum for international negotiations best suited to the nations' expectations. We reiterate its central role in the prevention and management of international crises, particularly in the field of peace and security, through the necessary updating process of its main operative organs, and primarily the Security Council, which should never be delegitimized.

The Council's reform, in the context of a larger reform of the United Nations system, is a fundamental step in the construction of the new international structure. The reform originated from the need to update the composition and the *modus operandi* of the most important United Nations organ to operate in a deeply changed international environment.

We are particularly thankful to the Secretary-General for courageously proposing, and partly already accomplishing, a complete, wide-ranging programme of reforms to strengthen the United Nations. This programme will progress because only an Organization in constant evolution will be able to prevent, in some cases, and to tackle, in others, the challenges of the next millennium.

San Marino feels internationally responsible and it feels the need to mobilize all its strength to find solutions of solidarity to the serious problem of the external debt of developing countries.

Faced with 3 billion people who still live with less than $2 a day, faced with 130 million children without access to education and 1.5 billion people without drinking water, we must support action aimed at creating sustainable development and healthy economic policies. The imbalance between rich and poor countries must not become irreversible, with tragic consequences for all humankind.

San Marino shares and supports the series of programmes and plans announced and applied by creditor countries and by the major world financial institutions to tackle this serious emergency. Programmes and plans have so far shown themselves to be insufficient to tackle the problem of debt in a decisive way.

We hope that the United Nations will intensify the debate aimed at an equitable and durable solution to the problem. In particular, we hope that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will represent the best laboratory of ideas for its definition. San Marino shares the ethical approach to the situation through solidarity and development. We believe this will give more hope to the people affected by this heavy burden.

In the past year the Republic of San Marino was one of the first countries to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court, convinced that such an institution is indispensable for the future world order. In international society, it represents not only a political advance, but moral progress, too.

The Republic of San Marino has recently established a permanent court of arbitration, trusting it will become a trustworthy and impartial international instrument for the resolution of national and international disputes. We are convinced that such an instrument will be duly evaluated by all Member States of the United Nations and that they will shortly be able to subscribe to a proper convention. We further believe that this initiative could represent a significant contribution by our country to the international community.

At the outset of the third millennium, we still find disconcerting the coexistence of a large, consolidated corpus of humanitarian laws and human rights and the spread of atrocities beyond all limits, affecting almost exclusively civil populations, mainly women and children.

The international community can rightly state that it has reached goals in the field of humanitarian law and human rights that were unimaginable 50 years ago. However, these considerable goals have been reached only with the simultaneous application of established rules. In this regard, we appreciate the tireless work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, aimed at filling the deep gap between legality and accepted practice, and at underlining the absolute need in the community of States for the full application of and respect for, international law. San Marino has great expectations of the future World Summit for Children.

In every country and in every culture there are messages of peace which are often forgotten, neglected or ignored. It is the responsibility of the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and all of us to rehabilitate those messages through the awakening of our conscience and the application of a universal culture of peace. This will happen if we are able to courageously identify and defeat the seeds of violence.

Therefore, we have to decide now what culture we want to defend: a culture where violence is considered an inevitable evil from which we can only protect ourselves, or a culture where violence can and must be eradicated.

The preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which includes the words,

> "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed",

remains today, in our opinion, the right perspective, because peace-building through dialogue, education and acceptance of differences is the best guarantee for the survival of humanity.

We all know that there are 45 armed conflicts going on at this very moment all over the world. Sadly, the spilling of stains of hate and violence constantly destroys the hope that humanity will soon prepare to use the so-called "peace dividend", resulting from the end of the balance of terror between the super-Powers, for positive goals.

The Republic of San Marino deeply appreciates the recent Security Council resolution expeditiously establishing a multinational peace force to change the situation in the East Timor crisis. What the United Nations is starting is a risky mission, but it will contribute to increasing the role and dignity of the United Nations, underlining its force as an impartial and neutral institution deploying itself as a bulwark against prevarication to defend the life and the dignity of humankind.

It is with great satisfaction that the Government of San Marino acknowledges the renewed impetus and momentum of the Arab-Israeli peace process negotiations. San Marino regards with equal satisfaction the present search for political solutions at the end of the Balkans conflict, activating a channel of concrete solidarity for the population of Kosovo.

The people of San Marino sadly regret to see that the important and topical question of the death penalty has not been included in the General Assembly's agenda. San Marino intends to continue to voice its protest against capital punishment, firmly convinced that the abhorrent instrument of death consciously and legally inflicted by one human being on another can be considered neither a valid and effective answer to defend society nor a deterrent against the spreading of criminality.

On behalf of the Government of San Marino, I wish to acknowledge once more the focal role of the United Nations with respect to the major challenges at the end of this millennium and the momentum that the greatest international Organization can provide for a new century, in which the supremacy of a culture of peace over a culture of war, of a culture of life over a culture of death, of the full realization of human dignity over its systematic violation, will prevail.

It is in this spirit that I wish good work to you, Sir, and to all the members of the Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.